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(HANSARD)

Monday, April 15, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 15, 2002

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.) moved that Bill C-429, an act to amend the Criminal Code (destruction of national flag), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity as we open this debate to clarify for everybody and the audience out there as well what the bill is all about and what the intent is of Bill C-429. Through this initiative I am trying to make a change to section 56 of the criminal code, which would state as follows:

56.1(1) Every one who, without lawful excuse, wilfully damages or destroys in any manner, burns, defaces, defiles, mutilates, tramples upon or otherwise desecrates the national flag is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction—

That is really what we will be debating here today. Within the initiative are two subclauses, one for a first time offence and one for a second offence. I will not elaborate on them but I will explain what the exception is within this initiative. It is as follows:

56.1(2) No person is guilty of an offence under subsection (1) if the person disposes of a national flag described in subsection (3) because the national flag has become worn, soiled or damaged.

That is the exception.

I also feel obliged to talk about the definition of national flag, as was asked of me during the subcommittee presentation I made in regard to what this includes and what it does not. I would like to clarify that now. The bill states as follows:

56.1(3) In the present section, "national flag" means the national flag of Canada, the official flag of a province or territory in Canada or the national flag of another country.

As members know, this is not an issue that is coming before the House for the first time. Not too long ago, my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant debated this same issue in the House. We talked about the merits of bringing forward such legislation. I am also well aware that another colleague, from the Alliance Party, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain, has a similar bill before the House. Why am I saying this? It just goes to prove to colleagues and the nation as a whole that this is something that we and our

constituents have been talking about. It is not a partisan issue. It is not whether it is the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Alliance or the NDP: This is an issue that affects each and every one of us, Canadian or not, citizen or not.

Let me also point out, especially to my colleagues in the Bloc who have asked certain questions about the definition, that sometimes we do something and realize a month or a year down the road that we should make an effort to fine tune, refine, et cetera. I went further with this initiative than previous initiatives did to make sure that we would include all the flags representing, first, Canada and then each and every province and territory. That of course satisfies each and every Canadian no matter where they live.

It seems so appropriate that my bill is before the House today, just two days before we will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the charter and the repatriation of the constitution. I cannot help but relate this debate to why we have the charter.

In past debates I went further and said how we make laws to protect various parts of our environment, to protect us as individuals. We make laws to protect nature, to protect endangered species, to protect our waters and to protect our children. As well, I know that there is now an effort underway by all party members in the House to ask that the criminal code be tightened with respect to child pornography and the Sharpe case in B.C. We are not happy, and rightfully so, with that, so what are we doing? We are taking a specific law that is in the criminal code and tightening it up, hopefully. What are we doing here? We are trying to create something that is not there.

• (1105)

As we are about to celebrate the charter, I want to take the opportunity to ask my colleagues and Canadians from coast to coast, what the charter does for us. The charter is meant to protect people from overzealous government actions and oppressive laws. The charter guarantees that certain fundamental rights will be protected, including freedom of expression, religion and association; the right to a fair trial; minority language protection and equality rights; freedom from cruel and unusual punishment; and security for person. I underline for person. Why do I underline that? We make laws to protect us. Who will make the law to protect our national symbol that cannot speak for itself?

It is okay to proudly display our national symbol when we are at the Olympics. We have taken it into battle. Our peacekeepers proudly display it. It is recognized proudly throughout the world. However it also seems to be okay to take the flag and burn it. I do not agree.

Private Members' Business

What are we doing as a people? The charter is there to protect persons. If that is the case and laws are made to protect people, then the people have an obligation to make laws to protect national symbols, to protect endangered species, to protect the environment, et cetera. As the debate unfolds today I encourage people to add their voices.

We know the bill may not be pursued beyond this debate but at least we are kick-starting the debate. I hope other people who will be speaking in the House will express that view, as Mr. Alexandre Cyr did in his letter to me not too long ago.

Mr. Cyr was a Liberal member of parliament from Gaspé between 1963 and 1984. He sent me a letter saying "Keep plugging away. Good work". He also sent me a copy of the pledge to the Canadian flag, which reads as follows:

To my Flag and to the country it represents, I pledge RESPECT and LOYALTY
Wave with PRIDE from sea to sea and within your folds, keep us ever UNITED
Be for all a symbol of LOVE, FREEDOM and JUSTICE
God keep our FLAG
God protect our CANADA

If God is there to protect our flag then we have an obligation to make sure that the means and the ways are in legislation to protect this symbol that cannot speak for itself.

Some members and some governments might not wish to pursue this thought today, but when the charter came in 20 years ago there was much criticism. I read in the paper just the other day how all of a sudden the percentage of support for our charter is growing. It is at the highest it has ever been. It is over 92%. Young Canadians today are saying that it is a good thing and a right thing. If we had asked the same question 20 years ago I am willing to bet others would have said, no, that it did not do this and it did not do that or it is too much of this and too much of that.

By commencing this dialogue today through my bill, Bill C-429, I am hoping that the debate will carry across the country and that people who genuinely care will send in their letters to the minister to move ourselves emotionally.

I have often heard that while there was an initiative in the United States, it was contested. How many other laws do we have today that are being contested and or changed? Does that mean we should not try? If Marconi, Edison or some of the previous inventors had not tried we might not have some of the technology that we have today.

I am not saying the bill is perfect. Maybe some of the language has to change in the future but I am willing to bet that if the minister of justice in any government moves forward on this at some point in time down the road we will find the way.

• (1110)

It pains me to see certain demonstrations. I believe in people's right to demonstrate but I do not believe they have the right to destroy private property while demonstrating, such as a window display or a car. If people wish to demonstrate they should make their placards and demonstrate. The flag, our national symbol, is not what people demonstrate for or against.

It is not only post-September 11 that has caused us to be more concerned. It has caused us to be more concerned but we had

demonstrations pre-September 11. We saw what happened in the battle in Seattle. We saw what happened at the conference in Quebec and other parts of the world. Flags were being burned. All that does in my view, and I am sure I speak on behalf of the majority of Canadians, is raise rhetoric and animosity and cause people to move apart as opposed to gathering around the table and creating dialogue for resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will remember well when the then right hon. prime minister John Diefenbaker brought in the bill of rights in 1961. It was the right idea at the right time. It was a different world and we had different thoughts. We did not have this global village in which we now live. We did not have the World Trade Organization, the G-7 and G-8. We did not have all these forums. We also did not have the hostility we have seen in most recent years on earth.

I commend Mr. Diefenbaker for bringing in the bill of rights at that time but it was not part of the constitution. As a result it did not have the supreme law of the land to back it up. It was the right thing. It started something and perhaps that is why we are here today. By bringing forward the charter we all of a sudden took it a notch higher: more protection, more rights.

I commend former Prime Minister Diefenbaker and all my colleagues who in the past spoke to the bill introduced by my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant. I know there is another bill coming from the Alliance Party and I commend it for bringing this type of private initiative forward to the House.

I hope each and every member in the House as well as those who are in committee or in other offices will read *Hansard* tomorrow or the next day to see my comments and the comments of others that will be put on the floor over the next little while.

I hope the machinery that is there will find the means and the ways to bring forward some kind of legislation that will send a signal to those who wish to demonstrate that, yes, they can demonstrate but that they should honourably protect the dignity of our first symbol, that being the Canadian flag, and each and every flag that represents our provinces and territories because they too are reflective of Canadian citizens who live in different parts of the country. They too deserve as much respect as our Canadian flag.

• (1115)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak in favour of the member's bill regarding legal protection for our national flag, our nation's symbol at home and abroad for Canada's beliefs and freedoms.

Canada's flag stands for the people of the world who have found a new country in Canada, a country shared by beliefs and aspirations, truly a nation of nations.

Private Members' Business

In March 2000, I stood in the House to speak in favour of a previous bill brought forward by my colleague from Prince George—Bulkley Valley to protect our flag. I agree with the member opposite that there have been several instances of bills being brought forward. I surely do encourage the House to act on one of these bills because it is of the utmost service to Canadians to provide this long deserved protection for our national symbol.

In March 2000, I rose in the House with a Standing Order 31. I wish to just repeat that today because it is very appropriate. My statement read:

How a nation views itself is a measure of its pride and self-esteem. How a nation is viewed by the world is a reflection of its collective deeds. How a nation projects this image is through its national symbol. Our nation is known throughout the world for its deeds in war and peace. Canada's symbol is its flag, which floats majestically over this very House. Our flag is the embodiment of our nation's heart and soul. To desecrate Canada's flag must be forbidden by law. To defile the symbol of our nation must have due consequence. The House will soon decide the importance of our flag. The member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley wishes to add the significance of a cloak of law to protect our flag. I ask for all to support his stand.

Today I ask that we support the member opposite's bill too for equal importance.

I would like to give a little history of the flag for people to review and look at.

The maple leaf is the latest flag to fly over what has become Canada. In the 15th century, John Cabot raised the cross of St. George, the English flag at the time, over Newfoundland. Thirty-seven years later and several hundred kilometres further west, Jacques Cartier planted the royal fleur-de-lis and claimed the land it stood in for the king of France. The fortunes of war saw the colony of New France ceded to England and the arrival of the royal union flag, the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew, after 1759. Following the act of union in 1801 in Britain, the cross of St. Patrick was added and the royal union flag became the union jack.

It was not until 1924 that the image of a maple leaf officially graced a flag representing Canada. The shield of arms of Canada, consisting of the lions of England, the lion of Scotland and the harp of Ireland, the three lilies of France's old regime and a sprig of three maple leaves was added to the red ensign, a flag originally created in 1707 for the British merchant marine. Referred to as the Canadian red ensign, an unofficial version was flown in World War I and officially later flown by Canadian troops during the second world war. Both the Canadian red ensign and the union jack were supplanted by the current flag in 1965.

The search for a uniquely Canadian flag began in 1925. In 1946 a parliamentary committee called for designs to be submitted. Though more than 2,600 were received, parliament was never asked to vote on a design at that time.

In 1964 Prime Minister Pearson renewed the search by striking a special committee which held 46 sittings and heard from heraldic experts, historians and ordinary citizens.

The Alberta government still officially recognizes the union jack and flies the flag over the Alberta legislature.

The committee endorsed the single maple leaf design and the House of Commons approved it on December 15, 1964. Two days later the Senate followed suit. Canada's national flag was proclaimed

by Queen Elizabeth II on January 28, 1965, and inaugurated on February 15 of that same year.

● (1120)

The maple leaf is an enduring symbol that can be traced to the very beginnings of Canadian history. The aboriginal peoples in eastern Canada were aware of the food properties of maple sap and harvested it every spring. This was a skill soon learned by the European settlers.

As early as 1700 the maple leaf was referred to as a symbol. In 1834 the first St. Jean Baptiste Society adopted the maple leaf as its emblem. Fourteen years later in 1848 *The Maple Leaf*, an annual Toronto literary review, declared the maple leaf to be the emblem of Canada. The symbolic status of the maple leaf was recognized by its incorporation into the badge of the 100th Regiment Royal Canadians.

To celebrate Confederation Alexander Muir composed the patriotic song, *The Maple Leaf Forever*. The maple leaf figured in the coats of arms of the new provinces of Ontario and Quebec. At the 1904 Olympics all Canadian athletes wore a red maple leaf on a field of white.

It was during the wars that it had the most significance. During World War I Canadians fought under both the Union Jack and unofficially under the Red Ensign. The maple leaf was also included in the badges of the Canadian expeditionary force.

In the choice of the national flag's colours history once again was to be a prominent factor. The combination of red, white and red vertical stripes was first formally recognized in Canada's first war veterans' medal ribbon issued by Queen Victoria to Canadian war veterans of the Fenian raids and Red River expedition of 1870. In 1921 King George V proclaimed that red and white were Canada's official colours.

The flag of Canada, wherever it flies, represents for all time the English and French linguistic duality in a great land of aboriginal beginnings that were blessed by a global culture within a shared union called Canada. Today I ask my colleagues in turn to support the legislation. I can appreciate the importance of legal protection for our flag, our country's logo to the world that has cost so much in human toil.

Two million have served Canada in uniform since Confederation and 110,000 died in service to the flag of Canada, our crown and country. Canada's flag is to be held in trust by our country for the efforts of our ancestors and for the benefit of our citizens.

I agree with the previous bill sponsored by the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. I agree with the bill of the member opposite today. It is high time and long overdue that our country stands forward to defend its flag and enacts a bill to protect it.

● (1125)

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this important issue, one that involves freedom of expression and dignity. It is about one of our important national symbols. In other words it is a debate over values.

Private Members' Business

This issue deeply touches all Canadians. The Canadian flag symbolizes, as we have heard today, democracy, freedom, liberty and Canadian unity. The Canadian flag and all it represents is the pride of all Canadians.

To better understand the issue before us it is important to recall the origins of our national flag. The significance of our national flag has occupied discussions on various occasions. The words that best describe our flag are those spoken by the Hon. Maurice Bourget, Speaker of the Senate, in February 1965 during the inauguration ceremony held on Parliament Hill before parliamentarians and thousands of Canadians. Unknowing of the issue that would one day arise before us he rightly stated:

The flag is the symbol of the nation's unity, for it, beyond any doubt, represents all the citizens of Canada without distinction of race, language, belief or opinion.

It is to this last item that I draw the attention of the House. Canadians are proud to be a tolerant and respectable people. We value our diversity of culture, religion and belief. We have incorporated into our constitution the fundamental principles of this wonderful country.

One of these, derived from tolerance, is freedom of expression. It is well understood that the actions to be prohibited by Bill C-429 amount to the expression of a political opinion by act or gesture. As troubling as that may be to some or perhaps even to most of us as Canadians there are other fundamental values that need to be protected which our flag represents.

I propose that what really upsets us is the message conveyed by the bill. The reality is that the message transmitted, a disagreement with government policy, is disturbing, but however disturbing the message may be putting limits on the expression of political opinion is nothing to take lightly.

We cannot justify criminalizing an act because we do not like the message it conveys. As a matter of principle criminal law in a free and democratic society such as Canada must be reserved for wrongful acts that seriously threaten our fundamental values of society. The freedom to express dissent is a fundamental value and Bill C-429 would limit that expression.

These acts simply do not amount to actions that require a criminal sanction. We must keep in mind that expressions judged distasteful by the majority are not in and of themselves a basis for restricting free speech in a free and democratic society.

Other countries have refrained from criminalizing the desecration of their flag, such as Ireland and the United Kingdom. The United States has attempted in the past to do so but the legislation was judged to be unconstitutional. It would be very likely that the proposed legislation represented by Bill C-429 would not survive a charter challenge in Canada. Freedom of expression is protected by section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and flag burning is recognized as a form of political expression.

In short, Bill C-429 would go against the fundamental values that our nation's flag stands for, that is, representing Canadians without distinction as to belief or opinion.

● (1130)

I share the views of the vast majority of Canadians that desecrating our national flag is truly an offensive behaviour. Those who commit such acts do nothing to forward their cause. However, while it is objectionable behaviour, because it is a form of political expression, it is protected by the charter and cannot be criminalized.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate today. I congratulate the hon. member for Scarborough Centre for bringing this issue to the floor of the House of Commons.

It is an issue of merit and fraught with emotion for many members of parliament and many Canadians. It is an issue that stems very much from our values and great desire to protect and preserve our symbols of national unity and symbols of importance to all Canadians.

The spirit and intent of the bill is to cause Canadians and parliamentarians to engage in an introspection and to talk about the vision for greater protection of our country and the symbols that represent our country. The intent of the bill is to highlight the importance of the growing sense of patriotism that we have in this young nation.

We are sometimes hesitant to engage in patriotism and acts which celebrate our country's accomplishments and place in the world. There are times when we identify with the flag and wrap ourselves in that symbol to the betterment of all and to the betterment of a sense of bringing people together.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party wholeheartedly support the intent of the bill to bolster the flag as a symbol of national unity and to protect that symbol. We support efforts to dissuade those who may engage in efforts and acts to desecrate, destroy and denigrate that great symbol.

I find myself in the somewhat uncomfortable position of agreeing with some of the arguments put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. By criminalizing those acts we would enter into a new realm where one would have to question to some degree the proportionality of the response. Yes we all frown upon those kinds of actions and want to do whatever we can to protect that symbol of Canadian pride and unity. However by invoking the use of the criminal code we would be using a blunt instrument to hammer home the desecration of the flag.

In my opinion it does not merit that type of response. The use of a criminal sanction would result in what I would describe as a further disproportional response. It could hamper a person's ability to partake in the opportunities that exist in Canada and would run against the very grain of the member's intent in preserving the sanctity of the flag.

The argument that has been put forward in the House with regard to freedom of expression does enter into this issue. Sadly, there are some who choose demonstrative acts of aggression toward the flag to make a political statement. Certainly no member of our party or any party in the House would condone those acts.

The reality is that sometimes it is an outlet for individuals to display their aggression, disdain and distaste for government policy or for countries of any origin. Some would suggest that aggression is far better taken out in the form of an act toward a symbol rather than an act toward an individual or a person's property which some would say is of greater monetary value, for example, a person's home or automobile.

Very often we see political demonstrations where a message is being sent through the destruction of a flag. This is not a scene which veterans or athletes or anyone who has donned the flag are pleased to see and who in fact cringe upon those occasions. That is a form of protest that has existed for some period of time.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned the Americans. There are probably many, myself included, who point to the Americans as among the most fervent patriots in the world. Yet they tolerate this act of aggression toward their flag. That action has been taken through their courts and it has been found, although wanting in terms of the act itself, to be within their constitutional boundaries.

●(1135)

It is important to note that section 430 of the criminal code, which deals with mischief to property, currently permits police in some circumstances to charge a person for the desecration and destruction of a flag, particularly if that flag belongs to another person, or an embassy, or an individual or an organization. However It does not preclude somebody from purchasing a flag or owning a flag and destroying it.

We also know that there are occasions when a flag is destroyed by way of a ceremony because the flag has become so faded or ripped that it is destroyed out of a sense of respect rather than a sense of disrespect.

It is somewhat difficult to make this a black and white issue by criminalizing the destruction of a flag in every instance. I note that the wording of the motion, by adding section 56(1) to the code and making it an offence to damage or destroy the flag, also includes the provincial, territorial or national flags. I am glad to see that the member included that because we know that there have often been acts of disrespect, and provocation between provinces. I am speaking specifically of the fleur-de-lys and the occasions where there have been attempts to enrage sentiments among provinces and to bring out the worst of those sentiments by displaying disrespect toward the symbol of a province, and similarly another country.

There would be some perverse irony in that a person might be charged in Canada with destroying an American flag or a flag of another nation if they were permitted to do so in their own country. That would be somewhat incongruous if we were to criminalize that act in our country.

There was mention that in Ireland and Great Britain the current case is that those flags are protected with such criminal sanctions. In the context of the unrest that exists in particular between the people in northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the acts of aggression that have occurred historically in those countries, I think we know that in those circumstances it was necessary. Perhaps even more so we have to emphasize the intolerance and the symbolism that results from any sort of desecration of the Irish national flag or

Private Members' Business

the flag of Great Britain, the Union Jack. I think it was in the historical context that I would deem a rather extreme step was taken in criminalizing it in those circumstances.

Under section 430, our code permits criminal charges to be laid for mischief against property, which a flag certainly would be, and allows for sanctions which are aimed at general deterrence and specific deterrence for those who engage in that type of act.

Rendering the property dangerous, useless, inoperative or ineffective would certainly fit that definition when it comes to destroying a flag. It would also allow for sanctions when somebody interferes with the lawful use or enjoyment or operation of property. Removing a person's flag from his or her property would allow for criminal sanctions to follow. Obstructs, interferes or interrupts the lawful use enjoyment of said property again would fit that description.

When looking at the overall effect of the bill versus the overall intent, I would have to say that we err on the side of not criminalizing acts of aggression toward the flag. By virtue of having this debate and bringing attention to it, raises the standard and consciousness and the respect and deep esteem that we should have for our symbols, in particular our flag, particularly when we talk, as the previous member did, about the long, deep history felt by veterans in the country and by our Olympic athletes.

Today we will be honoured with the presence of our Olympic and Paralympian athletes in the House of Commons who so proudly displayed that flag, yet there was a very dark incident where the American women's hockey team trampled on the Canadian flag. In that very instance it would have been disproportionate to lay a criminal charge against those individuals.

●(1140)

Yes, it goes against the Olympian model. It goes against everything about fair competition and all that we want to invoke in sport, but a criminal charge would be disproportionate.

While I agree with the intent of the hon. member's bill, I regret that, given certain legal restrictions, we should not pursue it in this fashion.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we close this debate, let me take this opportunity to thank the members who spoke to Bill C-429. I will close by referring to some of the words that my good friend from the Conservative Party said. He said it has created dialogue. This really is the intent here.

The member of the Alliance who spoke earlier said that there was a previous initiative from the Alliance party and that there will be another coming from that party. As well there was one from my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, along with my own. I also appreciate the words from the parliamentary secretary as well.

Government Orders

When members refer to the legislation that is in use in the United States, I agree. What the Americans did though was brought forth legislation which was challenged. If we go back, there were certain acts at that time of defacing, destroying and burning of American flags. The Americans brought in legislation even though the law had been challenged and struck down. Today or in the most recent years I do not think one sees that type of activity unfolding in the United States.

Should we have legislation in place or make amendments to the criminal code? It might be challenged and struck down, but between now and then a certain message would put out that this type of activity would not be permitted. If it was challenged, then we could approach the challenge at that time.

The most important thing for me, and I know I speak for many members in the House and for many Canadians, is that the dialogue has commenced and the issue has been raised. Rest assured the issue will continue to be there and will keep coming back. I will be the first person to say that my private member's initiative is not perfect, but it is a start and it is something on which to build.

I would like to thank all hon. members. I will not use the tactics of asking for unanimous consent. I refuse to do that. I brought forward Bill C-429 knowing that I would commence dialogue with all parties, so that the voices of my constituents and of all Canadians could be heard on the floor of the House. Members also could rightfully express the pros and cons of this type of an initiative, and I fully appreciate that. I think all of us have learned something today. As other members come forward in the future, I am confident that we will learn more.

I thank all my colleagues who participated in this debate.

• (1145)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Given that private members' hour has been short, I will suspend the House until 12 o'clock when we will resume work.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11.45 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 12 noon.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[English]

PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed from April 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I began my portion of the debate on this very important topic, I reminded members of the House and indeed Canadians who might have been watching, that the Pest Control Products Act was 30 years out of date.

The new PCPA that amends and would replace the Pest Control Products Act is a very important act and is long awaited. No doubt science has improved in the past 30 years as well as has our understanding of developing an appropriate regulatory regime. We are very pleased that the minister has brought this act forward.

I also identified a number of things in Bill C-53 that I supported. I would like to make an additional comment on this and that is there will be a mandatory special review of any pesticide that has been banned or voluntarily withdrawn by an OECD country as we recently saw in the United States. I identified a number of positive things in the act, and I want to remind members of the House and people watching that, less I be accused of being too cheery, I believe there are some shortcomings to Bill C-53; instances where the environment committee's recommendations are not reflected in the bill.

I am currently the government vice chair of the environment committee that undertook a one year study of pesticides and the regulatory regime in Canada around them. I am optimistic that the health committee can address some of these shortcomings, but I would like to focus on just a few now.

For example, the committee called for a clear and unequivocal statutory mandate to be given to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. The PMRA, although currently not an arm's length agency, has all the attributes of one. We felt therefore, that clearly identifying the de facto decision maker would be an important step in making the regulatory process more open and transparent. This has not been done in Bill C-53. The agency is not even mentioned in the bill.

The committee also called for a clear definition and application of legislation of the so-called substitution principle as is used in Sweden's environmental code. This would require that older pesticides be replaced with newer, less toxic products and non-chemical alternatives as they became available. This has not been done.

While I am talking about principles, a popular theme these days, let me address the question of the precautionary principle. The committee recommended the precautionary principle be enshrined in the bill's preamble as it is in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act or CEPA and this was not done.

The committee called for the precautionary principle to be enshrined in the bill's administrative section as it is in CEPA and this was not done. The committee also called for the precautionary principle to be enshrined in the operative sections. Under the bill, the minister may invoke the precautionary principle in the course of a re-evaluation or a special review. Unfortunately, it is not mentioned. At a minimum, and in the interests of cross-statute consistency, Bill C-53 should reflect CEPA in this matter. The result is a weak acknowledgment of the precautionary principle.

Government Orders

Finally, the committee recommended that the new legislation contain measures that would allow for the broadest public disclosure of information to the public similar to those requirements in sections 51 to 53 of CEPA. However sections 42 to 44 of the bill, which outline the proposed access to information, are not equivalent to the CEPA provisions. Again, for the sake of cross-statute consistency, this should be addressed.

● (1205)

The committee recommended that so-called confidential business information be narrowly defined in the new legislation to encompass only information that would be truly prejudicial to the financial or competitive interests of the person to whom it belongs. Unfortunately Bill C-53 uses too broad a definition. I hope this will be addressed when it moves to the health committee.

In closing, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the health committee in the weeks to come on this important legislation. During the environment committee's study of the pesticide regime I learned first-hand how passionately Canadians feel about the issue. I am optimistic that at the end of the day the minister and the government can deliver a modernized Pest Control Products Act that will protect the health of all Canadians, particularly children and other vulnerable groups.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as the other vice-chair of the environment committee it is my pleasure to speak to the bill.

As we have heard from my hon. colleague across the way, I was not part of the environment committee when Bill C-53 was discussed so I am not familiar with all the work put into it during that year. However I will add a few comments that might be helpful to the health committee as it looks at the bill.

My involvement with environmental issues dates back to my reading of *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson's book that pushed into the forefront the issue of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and so on and the impacts they might have. In those days a lot of mistakes were made. A lot of chemicals were developed that were effective, but no one looked at what they might do to our water and wildlife down the road. No one looked at the cumulative effects they might have for future generations.

I am pleased this piece of legislation is being revised. As the hon. member across the way mentioned, it has not been updated since 1969. An awful lot has changed in the area of chemistry regarding what works, what does not work and all the problems I mentioned.

I recognize the pressure on farmers trying to make a living who have had to deal with low commodity prices, increased input costs and so many environmental concerns. Other legislation before the House, Bill C-15B, is causing major concern regarding the definition of animal and the rights animals should have. We are all against cruelty to animals. However by taking the issue to the extreme we could put an awful lot of pressure on our agriculture community. Bill C-5, the endangered species legislation, could put even more pressure on farmers as it comes through the House later this week.

Now we are discussing pesticides. A lot of farmers are afraid the government will come after them and attack the very things that constitute their way of life and means of income. We want to make

sure members of the farm community understand that Bill C-53 would not target them. It would simply modernize a piece of legislation that has not been touched since 1969. I know many farmers who do not like using chemicals. They would rather not have to use them. However using various fungicides, herbicides and pesticides is a matter of survival for them.

Bill C-53 says the federal government would not interfere in the urban use of pesticides. It would leave it to the municipalities. That is a wise decision. It would allow each city to listen to its grassroots and make its own decisions. The most important emphasis for the health committee will be to look at the effect pesticides would have on children, animals and people in the community.

The new farming methods depend fairly heavily on the use of new herbicides and pesticides. Direct seeding is very common across most of western Canada. Saving fuel, reducing CO₂ and preventing erosion are all important when it comes to the new farming techniques. The downside is that farmers are fairly dependent on herbicides and pesticides to keep down weeds, insects and so on.

● (1210)

There is the matter of the runoff of these chemicals into our dugouts, streams and lakes and the effects it might have. We need a full study of water and the implications of pesticide and herbicide use on our water supply. The government has talked but has come forward with very little action regarding the survey of water.

We need to understand our aquifers. We need to understand the environmental implications on a much bigger scale than we now do. That is in the realm of federal concern. The federal government needs to show the provinces it wants to work together to develop a water inventory which includes the runoff of chemicals into our water supply. We have gone far too long without doing adequate studies to know what this means.

As I mentioned, the technology has improved. The modernization of chemicals and use of safer chemicals is all part of the new R and D. Chemical companies know they must have safe products. Because we have had such outdated legislation Canada has been pretty lax in the use of new chemicals. Bill C-53 would move us along those lines.

As has been mentioned before, when an OECD country says a chemical is suspect because it does not do the job it is supposed to and has other effects, Canada will start to look at that. This is a positive move. We need to register these chemicals. We need to understand their implications. These are all positive aspects of Bill C-53.

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A big concern I have and that our agriculture and health critics have spoken to is that we need to put this piece of legislation into committee where we can make amendments and so on. However I am a little tainted and unhappy because that is exactly what happened to Bill C-5. Government members, opposition members, environmentalists and so on all found fault with it. It went to committee. We worked for nine months to improve it. All members of the House worked hard and co-operatively on that piece of legislation.

When the government got the legislation back from committee it decided to reverse most of the amendments we had won in committee. If that is the sort of thing that happens with Bill C-53 I will question what the committee is doing or whether it is wasting its time with the amendments. I will get over it. However when I see something sent to committee and have great hopes for amendments, I hope the government will listen to the committee. Committees listen to hundreds of witnesses before making recommendations to make better pieces of legislation.

When we talk about pesticides we should also talk about labelling. All of us have experienced difficulties with labelling. Whether we spray a chemical on our lawn or on a bug we do not want in our roses, we sometimes have difficulty reading the labelling. I have always thought that needed a lot of improvement.

The labelling sometimes talks about the mixing of quantities but talks about spraying only one rose bush. This does not mean much to the user who may not be dealing with only one rose bush. Sometimes it is very unclear what one is supposed to do to safely use a chemical. Farmers have the same difficulty when mixing batches of pesticide. Clear labelling is needed. Anything the committee can do to improve labelling for the use of pesticides would help.

● (1215)

We need to speed up the registration process whether for drugs or the use of pesticides. We need to learn from others. We need to look at what the EU, the Americans and other countries are doing. We need to see why they are outlawing certain chemicals and bringing in new ones. Many new chemicals are cheaper, more effective and do a much better job. We need to be able to speed up the process. Again, I hope the committee deals with the issue of registration.

As I mentioned, the mandatory review of any chemical banned by an OECD country is a good move because it means those 50 some countries have done their research. If they find a reason to ban a certain chemical it is good to evaluate the information. However we want the evaluation to be based on sound science and not the whims or lobbying of chemical companies and agricultural groups. This is something the committee could amend and improve in Bill C-53.

When we put forward a piece of legislation like this we need to recognize that farmers are in competition with members of the European Union and their American colleagues, and that the competition is real. There is an awful lot of work we can do. As long as the committee is given the freedom to bring in the witnesses it wants and put forward the recommendations it wants, and as long as the government is committed to listening, we will go a long way toward having an improved piece of legislation.

As my party's agriculture and health critics have said, we will support this piece of legislation. We will take it to committee. We look forward to getting amendments with respect to labelling, use, evaluation and so on. Provided that all comes together, we look forward to supporting Bill C-53 when it comes to report stage and third reading.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the hon. member for Red Deer summed up the issue pretty well. However I have a question for him.

I am a farmer. Our farm has belonged to my family since 1911. Pesticides and insecticides are part of the tools we use to manage our farm. If our competitors have a product we do not have, why can Canada not be a bit more progressive in trying to harmonize our products with those of the United States, our closest neighbour and one of our biggest competitors in agriculture? If the United States goes through a review process why should Canada have to conduct the same review process all over again, which may delay the availability of the chemical to Canadian farmers for up to five years afterwards?

Is there not a method of harmonizing the tests required for new chemicals so that once they are approved for farmers in the United States they are approved for farmers in Canada as well?

● (1220)

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has touched on the turf war within some of our departments which feel they must do the same research over and over again for no other reason than to protect jobs. It is time we opened the issue up.

There is enough work for everyone although it might be different kinds of work. I cannot understand why 300 million people can afford a lot more research and development than 30 million people. Some 700 million people in the European Union can afford a lot more research than can 30 million people in Canada. It comes down to having the good of all of us at heart rather than protecting the pyramid of bureaucracy we sometimes deal with.

There is no reason we cannot take advantage of the research and development of other countries. We can lead in certain areas. In our military we have broadened our base so greatly we cannot do anything really well. It is the same for research and development with regard to pesticides, drugs and so on. Let us do what we do best. Let us not try to do everything. Let us not try to duplicate all the research going on around the world.

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Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, further to the issue that my colleague from Red Deer addressed, the matter of sharing information on these pesticides is a significant one insofar as we share a long border with our American cousins. Pesticides applied in Canada may well have an impact on the river systems in the United States. I wonder what sort of co-operation there may be in the offing on this issue. It seems to me that there is reason for Canada to work closely with the Americans on these matters, not only from a cost point of view but also from a practical point of view because of the border we share.

The second thing I would like him to comment on is the notion that the bill requires as part of the approval process that manufacturers show that their chemicals are effective. This as well seems to be an expense that we could do without.

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, I think harmonization is the big issue. In studying many environmental issues I have been shocked at how little we work between the U.S. and Canada even though we share water, we share aquifers and we share our borders. I think anything we can do, as he suggests, will be of benefit.

As far as the chemical effects are concerned, I might tend to disagree a little with him in that usually in its advertising a company will target what the effect will be. Again, the committee needs to look at that to see what extra expense there is, but companies should be able to justify that it will be effective for what they say it will be.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2001 the supreme court brought down a decision on the case of the city of Hudson, Quebec. Since 1991 this city has had a bylaw banning or limiting the use of cosmetic pesticides.

Does my colleague not find that the government has an obligation to consider the repercussions this may have on the municipal level?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, regarding the whole area of aesthetics and pesticides, I think our critics of agriculture and health have indicated that they believe it is best left in the hands of municipalities. They are closest to the people, it is their aesthetics and they should be the ones to deal with the issue. I will defer to them as to their beliefs on that. Obviously in committee they will bring in expert witnesses and will examine that issue.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday in the House I made a remark that on reflection was inappropriate and that I regret making.

If anyone was offended by the remark, I offer my sincere apologies.

[Translation]

PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to be able to take part in this debate on Bill C-53.

As a number of members of the House are aware, I have introduced a bill on two occasions. The first bill was C-388 and it later bore the number C-267. This bill banned the use of pesticides for non-essential purposes.

The purpose of my private member's bill, which I am no longer able to sponsor, having been a parliamentary secretary since September 2001, is to place a moratorium on the cosmetic use of chemical pesticides in the home and garden and on recreational facilities until scientific evidence that shows that such use is safe has been presented to parliament and concurred in by a parliamentary committee.

We will recall that the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development tabled a report in May 2000 on the existing legislation on pesticide registration. One of the committee's recommendations was that the government should make major and serious changes to this legislation. The outcome of this we have before us in Bill C-53.

Bill C-53 is the new Pest Control Products Act that Canadians have been waiting for for a long time. Some would say too long. The purpose of the bill is to amend legislation that is already about thirty years old. The time had definitely come.

The House, through the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, has examined the issue of the use of pesticides to eliminate pests. As I have already mentioned, the committee's report, entitled "Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for the Protection of Health and the Environment", was tabled in May 2000. It is the result of a lengthy study and testimony from numerous people and experts who explained that the current legislation was outdated.

The committee made a number of recommendations, the first one being that the Minister of Health introduce new pesticide legislation as a top priority.

I am very pleased that our government, through the Minister of Health, heeded the main recommendation of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, and introduced a bill.

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However, like many of my colleagues, I have studied the bill. Analysis of Bill C-53 reveals that the main purpose of the bill is to prevent people and the environment from being subjected to unacceptable risks resulting from the use of pest control products. This fundamental question or risk assessment is based on the health assessment of children, pregnant women, seniors and, in some cases, the specific risk associated with an exposure ten times greater than the allowable levels.

This bill does contain good elements, such as setting up a public registry. This will guarantee the public access to health information. This is a step forward. This bill also allows for the protection of whistleblowers and information sharing between departments with respect to pesticides.

• (1230)

Another major step is being taken in that there is a provision to the effect that the burden of proof for the safety and value of a product is clearly on the registrant or applicant. This is also a step in the right direction and it is a very positive aspect of this bill.

However, Bill C-53 has a number of serious flaws, in my opinion. For example, the precautionary principle and its application are very restricted under this act. The preamble does not even mention it. If the government, and I am part of it, is serious about achieving the primary objective of Bill C-53, which is to prevent unacceptable risks for people and the environment from the use of pest control products, it is essential that the precautionary principle be included in all aspects of the decision making process.

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development recommended, and I quote:

Appropriate preventive measures are to be taken where there is reason to believe that a pesticide is likely to cause harm, even when there is no conclusive evidence to prove a causal relation between the pesticide and its effects.

But there is not even a definition of an unacceptable or acceptable risk in the bill. I hope that when this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, the committee and all members will take a very good look at the few flaws I have mentioned.

The implementation of this bill will depend on the subjective interpretation of this concept which, as I mentioned, is not defined. The precautionary principle is only applied in the proposed legislation in re-evaluation or special reviews. At an operational level, the precautionary principle must be used in all decisions respecting pest control products.

Another flaw is that there is no science based inherent toxicity criteria, that is, there is no threshold for endocrine destruction, neurotoxicity or carcinogenic content of a pesticide specified for testing of the products. There is no requirement to re-register or evaluate pesticides for use on GMOs, that is genetically modified organisms. This is a problem.

The committee recommended that the regulatory agency be expressly mandated under the new legislation, or under another bill, to inform and educate the public about the risks associated with the use of pesticides and the availability of less harmful alternatives. Attitudes about pesticide use must be changed through aggressive public education programs.

The regulatory agency should not be given the exclusive responsibility to carry this out given that many federal departments make vital contributions to public awareness raising. It should be spread throughout the system. Public education should be a key component of the legislation.

We also need a commitment in the bill to the pollution prevention principle. There is no substitution principle included in the bill, that is, a requirement to deregister older pesticides once newer and safer ones are registered.

• (1235)

I think that this is an oversight in the bill, which could be corrected when the committee examines it.

Transparency should be a part of any new legislation and any new regulatory process introduced by government. This is something Canadians in the third millennium want. They want a government which is accountable, which behaves in a transparent manner. I think that the issue of transparency should be addressed in this bill. As we can see, there is no requirement for a sales database.

There is no direct mechanism for submission of independent scientific findings, as requested by the committee. We asked for that as well. There is no requirement to establish a database on reported adverse effects.

There is no specific mention of the Pest Management Advisory Council and there is no requirement for harmonization between the protection of human health and the environment in order not to weaken Canadian standards.

I think that Bill C-53 is a clear improvement over what we have right now. One of the members across the way mentioned that the Supreme Court of Canada had handed down a ruling with respect to the town of Hudson, Quebec. I believe that this ruling also involved other municipalities in Quebec which had regulated the use of pesticides within their boundaries and, in certain cases, had prohibited the use of pesticides and chemical products for cosmetic purposes. Companies accused the municipality of exceeding its powers and took it to court.

In a decision handed down in June 2001, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled very clearly that the federal government had jurisdiction over these matters, as do provincial and territorial governments. Municipalities have jurisdiction as well, provided that jurisdiction is not covered by the federal and provincial governments.

The Supreme Court of Canada went so far as to say that in today's reality there is more information available on how disruptive chemicals can be and how harmful to the health of our environment and our fellow citizens. As well, local governments are often in a better position to determine the needs of the population and the most effective means of ensuring their protection and of preserving or improving the environment in which their citizens live.

I was very pleased with this judgment. I have already met with several mayors and councillors of municipalities in order to encourage them to examine this matter and to pass bylaws on the use of pesticides in their municipalities. I must also congratulate the Government of Quebec, my government since I am a Quebecer, on the statements made by the minister, André Boisclair, on the Government of Quebec's intention to act on this matter. I am most pleased to hear this and am prepared to co-operate with my provincial government, because I feel this is a matter of vital importance.

• (1240)

If we want to have a healthy country a hundred years from now, we have to start right now taking care of the environment and of people's health. One very real way of doing so is to enact legislation that regulates the way pesticides and pest control products are used, particularly those manufactured from chemicals, based on the precautionary principle.

I will not take any more of the House's time. The Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development has done a good job. The outcome of that was its May 2000 report. The Minister of Health has done a good job as well. This is an excellent start, but once the standing committee has had the bill referred to it, I expect it to pay very serious attention to the comments, recommendations and suggestions originating with both sides of this House, in order to improve the bill and ensure that its objective of health and environmental protection is attained by the mechanisms contained in the bill, or to be added to it.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine for congratulating the Parti Québécois and its minister, André Boisclair, particularly on an issue of such importance as pesticides and the environment.

It must be understood that the municipal level has full jurisdiction—as the hon. member pointed out—when the federal and provincial governments do not get involved, or when they do not have regulations in effect. Municipalities have been very successful in protecting their environment, particularly from pesticides used for so-called esthetic purposes.

Still, I would like to hear the hon. member's view on Bill C-53, which is silent on an improved registration process for less toxic pesticides. It must be understood that once the government gets involved with regulations, it prevents provinces and municipalities from regulating. So, there is some kind of a flaw here.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on the registration process which, in my opinion, should clearly be a quick process or phase for less toxic pesticides. I would also like to hear her comments on the incentives that such a bill could include for farmers who, among others, use pesticides for industrial purposes.

As far as I am concerned, the government made a mistake by not including a process to encourage, through credits, the industry and those who use industrial pesticides to find alternatives more quickly.

• (1245)

Mrs. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments, his suggestions and his question. As for

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the registration process, I agree with the fact that the bill has shortcomings in this regard. Let me give a simple example.

There are already completely non toxic products on the market, that are not chemical pesticides. In Quebec, scientists and businesses have developed organic products. Occasionally, they want to market a product that already exists in Europe, or in the United States. In such cases, the current registration system can take between 24 and 36 months. This makes no sense.

The committee must look closely at this bill's registration system, I believe. There should be both a fast-track process and a normal process. The bill should contain provisions for cases where a product has already been registered by other countries and where all of the work has already been done, that would allow the agency to ensure that its registration process is comparable to ours, as we do with degrees.

When people get their law degree from the school of law at the Sorbonne, or a graduate degree from the Sorbonne, there is already a certification system in place here in Canada, through our professional bodies. It is already being done. All people have to do is send their credentials, diplomas, and the rest, and they receive a certificate saying that it is the equivalent of a master's degree from a Canadian university, for example.

I do not see why, then, the same could not be done when it comes to registering products that already exist on other markets, such as the international market. That is the first thing.

The second part of the question is as follows. When a new product is registered and science has proven that it is much more effective and much less toxic than an existing product, why is there no process to deregister the old product? This is an interesting concept, and I would like the committee to examine the idea.

Indeed, in other fields, such as in pharmaceutical sector, there are products that still exist, but that are used in much more limited ways than before. This is because there are new products and drugs that are much more effective and have less side effects. This is an excellent second point raised by my colleague. I would invite to committee to look into this issue as well.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments made by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, who spoke for the Liberals. I agree with her that this bill could improve a very serious situation.

The member perhaps knows that this bill is not perfect, that problems remain, and that it could be improved. I have a number of questions. However, what I particularly wish to know is whether the member can address the concerns of all opposition members.

If the Standing Committee on Health is proposing amendments to this bill and addressing these concerns constructively, can the member do something to make sure that the government does not block these amendments and that it will give very serious consideration to the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Health?

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•(1250)

Mrs. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to commend my colleague on the quality of her French. I much appreciate her speaking to me in French.

My colleague wished to know whether I, as a Liberal member and parliamentary secretary, will make sure that the government does not scrap any amendments made by the Standing Committee on Health, once this bill is referred to it. First of all, as I lawyer, I never prejudge anything.

I myself have mentioned a few shortcomings—not all—which I noticed in my reading of the bill. Other members, whether on the government or opposition side, mentioned the same shortcomings, and others as well.

I hoped that, once this bill was referred to it, the Standing Committee on Health would take into consideration the debate in the House and all the comments, suggestions and recommendations made by both sides during this debate. Once the bill comes back before the House and the committee has tabled its report, I will certainly examine very carefully any amendments made.

We all know that the youth criminal justice legislation, for instance, was the product of several bills. I was one of the Liberal members who worked very hard for years getting the government to move one inch at a time until we had a bill which I, as a lawyer, as—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. I also wish to remind her that she must address her remarks to the Chair. I could have pointed this out to her at the time.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-53. I note that Bill C-53 would replace the Pest Control Products Act of 1969. We do not have to do a lot of mental mathematics to realize that it has been over 33 years since this act has been revisited and revamped.

We all agree that the world has changed dramatically since 1969. It is overdue and welcome in many circles for us to be dealing with such a timely and topical bill.

I should note, and would be remiss not to, that the Liberal government first promised new legislation during the 1993 election campaign. It was the former health minister who promised the legislation by the year 2001. Some hon. members on the other side are seeing this as the fulfillment of an election campaign promise perhaps, albeit from the 1993 election campaign.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development produced a study to assist the Minister of Health in advising what type of legislation would be necessary to deal with the management and use of pesticides. It included an examination of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, PMRA.

We note that in putting forward Bill C-53 the primary objective is the protection of human health and the environment, and finding some balance where both of those issues can be addressed.

We will admit that Bill C-53 is much stronger than the current legislation. We are pleased to be able to take note of that. We feel

there has been some balance struck among the interests of health, environmental concerns and the legitimate concerns of industry, many of which have been raised in the House during this debate.

Bill C-53 would seek to introduce the use of modern risk assessment practices. In other words the further consideration or the enhanced consideration of vulnerable populations such as children and the aggregate sum or the total exposed cumulative effect on children. Speaker after speaker have raised in the House, and we all agree, that children are especially vulnerable to the proliferation of chemical and pesticide use in our cities, even in industrial settings where there is overspray, and of being contaminated by farm practices.

It is something about which we have come to realize more and more only recently. I will give one example from my own experience. The hon. member for Winnipeg South will possibly remember this. There was a time in Winnipeg when we had DDT foggers going up and down the residential side streets and through the city parks late at night. What did we do as kids? The hon. member remembers very well. We used to ride our bikes behind the fogging truck because it was pretty neat to lose sight completely in such a dense fog of DDT haze mixed with diesel oil which in fact compounded the effect. This was our entertainment for the afternoon, following a truck full of poison.

Children do things like that. Children by their very nature play on the grass. Kids put things in their mouths. They pick things up from the ground and put them in their mouths. There has to be a growing recognition that the interests of children must be our primary consideration in any piece of legislation like this.

The other thing that has only been recognized recently is that we do not have to ingest these chemicals to be put at risk by them. Skin absorbs them; it acts like a sponge. This is something I know from my background in workplace safety and health in the labour movement. Exposure to chemicals and toxins need not be oral. One can ingest them by absorbing them through the skin. They work their way through the body and find a natural state of repose in the organs, in the liver, kidneys and pancreas. There they sit for many years. The cumulative effect, the total aggregate effect of chemicals on our bodies is something we are only just starting to recognize and realize.

•(1255)

Another thing happens. Not only is that chemical ingested through the skin and not only has it found a natural state of repose in the organs, but other chemicals come to join it there. Chemical *A* sits in the kidneys or the liver. Then chemical *B* is introduced to the kidneys or liver and a chemical reaction of those two things causes chemical *C*. We might begin with two benign chemicals but combine them and we could have a very toxic substance. This is a risk we are starting to recognize in people in the workplace and in children.

Another thing I would point out in the labour movement is that in the workplace there is what is called the walking wounded. A lot of poisoned people are wandering around out there with a ticking time bomb in their internal organs which may or may not cause complications later on.

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In dealing with the bill as it pertains to children, there is something I noticed as a hockey dad. Both of my kids played hockey right up through the high school level. I noticed with my older boy that quite a number of kids carried ventilators for the treatment of asthma. A couple of kids on his team had to use puffers throughout the game.

By the time my younger boy went through the system six years later, kids eight and nine years old would sit on the bench waiting for their turn to play hockey and their puffers were lined up on the boards. I think seven out of fifteen kids on the roster had to use inhalers, all labelled and ready for use. When they came off the ice after their shift they had to use their ventilators. At the risk of sounding alarmist, I cannot help but think there is something fundamentally wrong with that picture when seven out of fifteen otherwise healthy young athletes are so affected by asthma that they have to use ventilators to finish a one hour hockey game.

I point those things out to stress that nothing short of making the best interests of children the absolute primary consideration would be satisfactory to me. I think we have matured in our treatment of this issue. I do not believe there is a member in the House who would not acknowledge and agree that a key provision is the protection of vulnerable populations, such as children, from the total aggregate and cumulative effects of unnecessary exposure to toxic pesticides.

The other thing the bill acknowledges is how necessary material safety data sheets are. The workplace hazardous materials information system legislation is now law in all workplaces across the country. Key and paramount in the WHMIS legislation is the right to know and the right to refuse. Workers have the right to know what chemicals they are working with and they have the right to refuse to handle them if they believe they pose a risk to their health and well-being.

There is that recognition in Bill C-53. It extends and extrapolates that basic human right, that we do not have to touch things we know to be harmful to us. However it does not address the issue I tried to outline, that we can have a perfectly benign chemical in one hand and another perfectly benign chemical in the other but when we combine the two in the Petri dish which is the body, there is that third chemical which can and does sometimes hurt us.

I have tried to be balanced in recognizing some of the advantages of Bill C-53. One of the concerns my party has regarding the bill is that the legislation is extremely vague. This has been a developing pattern in the pieces of legislation I have witnessed in the short time I have been a member of parliament. More and more there is very little binding teeth in the legislation and so much of the details are left to regulation. In other words, the details are in regulations that will not necessarily be dealt with in the House of Commons but will follow after to give meaning to the language in the legislation that we pass here.

Some of the issues that will have to be dealt with in regulation are the details and the timeline for the re-evaluation process. Another issue is the type of tests to be used in risk assessment. Those are critical issues which I think should be debated in the House of Commons. They will not be. They will be regulatory, not legislative.

● (1300)

Another concern is that the precautionary principle is not really enshrined as one of the basic principles of the bill, not even in the preamble, not even in the soft language that is often the preamble to legislation. We believe that in any environmental bill in this day and age or certainly in a bill related to health care, the precautionary principle must be one that is adopted as a basic premise, as one of the basic tenets. The pillars of anything we do must adhere to and stem from that precautionary principle. It is noticeably absent in the bill.

There is a failure in Bill C-53 to ban the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. We thought that the debate around pesticide use had matured to the point where we could accommodate this basic issue. More and more around the country we are hearing about municipalities taking that step. Maybe there are industrial uses and reasons from a health care point of view that pesticides are necessary. Surely they are not necessary to make lawns greener.

There is nothing more perverse than driving down a suburban street and seeing a beautiful expansive green lawn in front of a house with a sign that reads "Danger, do not play on this grass, toxic substances used". There might as well be a skull and cross bones planted on that beautiful lawn if so much poison is applied that it is dangerous for a child or a dog to be exposed to it.

It would have been a bold and courageous step on the part of government if it had introduced legislation that would deal with banning the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. We are disappointed that Bill C-53 fails to do this. We certainly hope that our member on the health committee, the member for Winnipeg North Centre, will be able to introduce amendments that will be entertained favourably which might give us some satisfaction on those pressing issues.

We are also critical of Bill C-53 at the lack of a fast track registration process for lower risk products. There could be a graduated scale where lower risk products could be dealt with in a fast track registration process. That was raised early on in the debates and consultations surrounding the legislation, but we do not see that reflected in the bill.

There is really nothing in Bill C-53 that would reduce the number of pesticides being used. We would have thought that the bill could have been introduced with the preface that it is the intention of the government to gradually reduce the number of pesticides in circulation. That would have been a very good place to start. That does not seem to have been one of the objectives in Bill C-53. We would have thought that most Canadians would have welcomed and celebrated that.

Nothing in Bill C-53 would really give satisfaction to those who are interested in reducing the number of pesticides in circulation. It talks about further regulating this. It talks about ways to protect Canadians from harmful exposure, et cetera. However it really does not talk about minimizing or reducing the use of pesticides in general and it does not prevent Canadians from being exposed to the most harmful pesticides.

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I will balance this off so that my speech is not entirely negative, but I have to share with the House that some of our concerns stem from the failure in Bill C-53 to require the labelling of all toxic formulants, contaminants and microcontaminants. We flag that as a criticism as well.

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency was examined by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I noted earlier in my speech that this was done in May 2000, yet there is failure to set out the mandate of the pest management regulatory agency in Bill C-53. We are critical this basic recognition fails to show up in the bill. If we are going to rely on the regulatory agency for guidance, advice and direction in the future, then surely the mandate of the PMRA should have found its way into the bill.

● (1305)

Bill C-53 fails to commit money for research into the long term effects of pesticides. If our primary consideration is the best interests of children, we need to know more about that toxic soup I talked about. We need to know more about the long term effects of the liver becoming a repository for who knows how many different chemicals that get stirred around and mixed up and turned into yet another chemical, a brand new chemical compound for all we know. The long term effects of pesticides is not really known.

I shudder to think what it was like for me and the member for Winnipeg South cruising around on our bicycles behind that fogging truck full of DDT and 2,4-D. He and I seem to have survived to date, but I would not want to see what our organs look like through a fluoroscope. Our livers could look like whiffle balls for all we know.

Mr. Reg Alcock: Some of us have yet to come out of the fog.

Mr. Pat Martin: The hon. member says that some of us have yet to come out of the fog. Many have found their way into government, those fog sniffers of yore.

The failure to commit money for research into the long term effects of pesticides is a major shortcoming of Bill C-53, especially as it pertains to children and public education about the dangers of pesticides and support for alternatives. Chemical companies constantly advertise on television to use this or that product. If there are problems with pests, zap them with this or zap them with that. On one side in the media we are faced with a sales campaign promoting the further use of pesticides in our society. We in my party feel the government should have introduced a countervailing measure to mitigate that influence by telling the other side of the story. In other words, use a product if we have to but be aware of the dangers.

The NDP critic recommends that we oppose Bill C-53. We do not support Bill C-53 in its current configuration. Even though it is an improvement over the former Pest Control Products Act of 1969, the bill is still flawed and still fails to protect Canadians. It is not bold or courageous. It is not innovative or visionary. The bill is pedantic and rather sluggish in its tone and content.

Bill C-53 may bring up the standards somewhat close to U.S. standards, but it still falls way behind the European standards. It is not striving to achieve the best practices internationally, a favourite cliché. Let us scan the globe for the best practices and emulate them. It makes good sense. We have chosen to ignore the best practices in

the world and instead have chosen to align ourselves with second, third or fourth rate practices such as we are finding in the American regulatory system.

The legislation is still an improvement over what we have, I grudgingly admit. However, it is not nearly as bold as it could have been if we really wanted to set some standards and show the world our concern about this issue.

Harmonization with U.S. regulations may have a dangerous effect in the long term because it will be harder for us to ultimately adopt the higher standards in the European model. Given the scientific evidence that exists, this legislation should have been much stronger in its efforts to protect human health and the environment.

I would like to recognize the contribution made by the member for Winnipeg North Centre on the Standing Committee on Health with regard to the bill. She points out that at least that committee is dealing with a piece of health legislation which, in the five years I have been a member of parliament, is a very scarce rarity. The House of Commons at least is dealing with an issue of preventive medicine. We support and encourage that.

We in the NDP are critical of the bill. We will be moving amendments to it. We hope we can convince the government side to entertain many of the issues we have raised.

● (1310)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I found the hon. member's comments very intriguing and quite interesting.

One issue that he did not address, and I wonder if there is not a repository of information that might be useful in the arguments he presented, is the notion that credible research and data have been accumulated in other jurisdictions which may prove useful to the Government of Canada in determining which pesticides it should use. I wonder if he sees any benefit in that.

The second point is this issue that we do share a long border with the United States. Should we not be working more closely with the U.S. in selecting the pesticides that may be used in this country given the fact that water does flow across the border in many jurisdictions, such that we do share the results of the spraying of any chemicals on crops or even lawns?

Could the member comment on those two matters?

● (1315)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to touch on both of those very valid points.

Government Orders

To answer the first point, I believe that we are not acting as an international community on this issue as well as we could be. If in fact there is research in other jurisdictions that would give us some direction and some guidance, we would be foolish not to seek out that research instead of wasting our own resources re-inventing the wheel and duplicating research. We could learn from the valid research that other scientists have done in other countries. I cannot believe that sharing those resources is not automatic and not more widespread. In the interests of our collective well-being, those resources should be, and I believe are, freely shared. I believe I did touch base on this with the fast tracking of the regulatory process. We believe this could be an element of the fast tracking of the approval process in that it is not always necessary for Canada to do original research if that research has been done in other countries recently by clean science that we trust. That would probably help the fast tracking in the regulatory process.

In terms of harmonization with the United States, it is absolutely necessary. I think I understand the issue the hon. member is getting at. We do share watersheds and we do share practices north and south of the border, so that at least we should be compatible. I suppose that is the term I am looking for. The point I was making was not to be critical of the fact that we are seeking to harmonize somewhat with the United States. The shortfall I was pointing out is that it may slow us down in trying to harmonize to an even higher standard, which does exist in other European countries. Should we tie ourselves absolutely to the regulatory and licensing processes in the United States, we may be less willing to look further afield to other countries that are setting even higher standards and it may prove to be more of a hindrance than a help as we try to elevate our own standards.

The hon. member is quite right that, in my part of the world at least, the watershed begins in the United States and flows through Canada before ultimately winding up in Hudson's Bay. We have great interest in and great concern about what products are being used in the United States. The only way we will have some comfort and satisfaction is by co-operating with that country to ensure that we are not violating one another's atmosphere and environment.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member about the comments he made with regard to children suffering from asthma who may or may not have been affected by pesticides, causing them to have a higher incidence of asthma. He made reference to children lining up to use their puffers at local hockey games and so on. I am an asthma sufferer myself and have been since a very early age.

While he is quite right to note that the incidence of asthma has been growing over time in Canada and in a number of other countries, there is no confirmation that the source of this problem is necessarily pesticides. For example, I have heard the argument presented that the widespread use of childhood inoculations may in fact be the thing that causes that recessive tendency toward asthma to be triggered. There may be other pollutants in the atmosphere. I note in particular that one of the curious things that has gone on over time is that as the amount of pollution in the atmosphere has gone down we have seen the incidence of asthma go up.

I am wondering in particular if he is aware of any science which would indicate that in areas of the world or in this country where

there is a greater exposure to pesticides it is resulting in a greater local incidence of asthma among children than in other areas of the country. That would seem to be the best way of testing this hypothesis.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I hope that I did not overstate my point. I am loath to ever overstate anything. It is not in my nature. The point I was hoping to make, which perhaps did result in people thinking that I was drawing a direct connection between pesticide exposure and children's asthma, was that in all pieces of legislation about the environment the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration.

If that was extrapolated to be understood that I thought there was a direct connection between pesticide use and asthma, let me say that I do not have any empirical evidence to support that, other than to point out that one of the reasons that we boycott grapes, that people where I come from and people I know do not eat grapes, is the use of pesticides on grapes in California and in Mexico. Among the grape pickers, the migrant farm workers represented in that area by the United Farm Workers and Cesar Chavez, it was the children who first showed the symptoms of overexposure to pesticides when they were picking those grapes. Bronchial congestive disorders were the first symptoms. After that came the swollen lymph glands and the other terrible symptoms we see in the photographs of children exposed to pesticides. The first indication was the pulmonary bronchial problems, chest related breathing issues. It had to do with rapid heart rate and with contaminants finding their way into the airways first. That is the only actual example I can point out. I have always believed that chronic, unnecessary exposure to chemicals and pesticides at least plays a role in the incidence of asthma we are seeing among our children.

● (1320)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are just two things in my colleague's speech that I would like to ask him about.

First, he mentioned his concern about cosmetic pesticides and said he wishes that was in the federal legislation. My question for him is this: Is it not better, as the bill does, to leave it with the municipalities that are right on hand? They are right there. They know the feelings of their constituents better. Is that not better rather than having the big thumb of the federal government coming down on them and telling them what to do with their lawns, their gardens and so on?

Second, he mentioned that we should have far fewer chemicals. I wonder if he does not really mean that we should have more modern chemicals, that we should get rid of some of the old ones that in fact are not environmentally or biologically sound, and that in fact the big problem is in actually registering these chemicals in order to get more modern ones.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Canadian Alliance Party does not like the big thumb of the federal government or getting involved in other jurisdictions. In this case I suppose it would be the big green thumb, which is in fact the trademark of the pesticide company in my neighbourhood that sprays lawns with chemicals to keep them green.

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I would argue that it is a legitimate role of the federal government to try to set national standards. If we just leave it up to the municipalities to deal with it community by community, that is an exhausting and tedious process and we may not have buy-in from all communities. Some communities will choose to participate and some will not. It is a legitimate role for the federal government to try to lead by example and set national standards when it is in the national interest.

As to using far fewer chemicals, I do not think there is anybody here who would disagree with the idea that we should be using fewer chemicals in our agriculture and in our cosmetic use. We should be pouring less toxic substances into the biosphere, into the environment.

My only point, and the only reason I raised it briefly in my speech, is that I thought it should have been at least one of the tenets of the legislation. Or it should be a goal or a stated objective that the purpose of Bill C-53 is to try to minimize the use of pesticides in our ecosystem. I do not stand back or apologize for that. I believe in it strongly. Whether they are old chemicals, current chemicals, modern chemicals or good or bad chemicals, we should be striving to reduce the chemicals we pour into the ecosystem.

• (1325)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-53. Before I get into the meat of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that you were not in the chair when it was mentioned that the members for Winnipeg Centre and Winnipeg South used to chase DDT fogging wagons. I am sure this must be a form of entertainment in the city of Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba. Coming from west of the city of Winnipeg, I can assure all members that we never did chase DDT fogging wagons. That may well speak to the level of abilities of the members from the province of Manitoba.

Bill C-53 is legislation that should have been before the House quite a while ago, certainly in the beginning stages of the government's first mandate. This piece of legislation goes back to 1969. It has been some 33 years since it has been in place. It should be updated on a regular basis because this is a part of the industry that changes quite dramatically, not only from year to year but in fact from month to month.

It was suggested by a previous minister of agriculture of the day, Mr. Don Mazankowski, that this legislation should come forward to deal with any number of issues. However, this has not happened. The government was somewhat negligent in its own opportunities to bring forward a very sound piece of legislation. The legislation does have its warts and pimples, however, in saying that, we believe it is far superior to the piece of legislation that has been in place since 1969.

The Progressive Conservative Party has always insisted that the pesticide legislation come forward, for two major reasons. The first is to evaluate the effects of the exposure and toxicity of pesticides, herbicides and chemicals on vulnerable parts of our population, obviously the younger individuals among us as well as older people who have a tendency to be more susceptible to the negative effects of pesticides and herbicides. We believe very strongly that the legislation should have come forward for that purpose.

We would also like to see an educational initiative undertaken with the ultimate goal of reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides. That does not necessarily mean that we should not replace them with alternate pesticides and herbicides that are better not only for the environment but for the health of our citizens. That is obviously where we should be heading. To a degree, Bill C-53 does speak to that particular end and goal.

I must say, however, that this is like all pieces of legislation developed and drafted by the department. It does not necessarily encompass all of the necessary nuances to make it perfect. That is why we have the process we do, whereby after this reading it will go back to committee, which will debate it, have an opportunity to listen to all stakeholders and people affected by this and hopefully come back with some changes or amendments to the legislation that in fact will make it better. Nobody has a lock on ideas, least of all the government. We hope that there is some open-mindedness and we hope that the government is prepared to listen to some of those very positive amendments to the legislation to in fact make it better.

I mention that because there are a number of shortcomings in the legislation. I simply will mention them in passing. I know that our member sitting on the health committee, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, will be able to take our position forward and hopefully change the legislation.

First, Bill C-53 fails to expedite access to newer and safer pest management products. I will speak to that a little later, but the ability to bring forward newer and safer pesticides is not built into the legislation. That is so very, very important because there are pesticides, herbicides and chemicals out there that are much better for the environment and much better for human health and safety, but we do not have the built in opportunity to bring them forward under our current regulatory system.

• (1330)

The bill also fails to differentiate between the commercial and the cosmetic uses of pesticides. I come from a riding that is dependent on agriculture. Agriculture, in order to not only feed Canadians but also feed a greater number of people outside our domestic market, is dependent upon and requires the ability to use pesticides and herbicides to grow that crop.

Unfortunately we have not differentiated between that absolute necessity of a commercial requirement for pesticides and herbicides and a cosmetic pesticide in this legislation. They are dramatically different, particularly in our agricultural areas. I am sure Canadians appreciate that.

The legislation also fails to translate into viable alternatives to the current regime and does not translate into a workable registration system. Again, I speak to the PMRA, and I will get to that in the not too distant future.

Also, the legislation does not provide adequate transparency. Agricultural stakeholders agree that transparency is necessary but not at the cost of allowing public access to confidential business information.

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Agriculture is very important with respect to this, and I would like to talk about the PMRA. For those people who do not know PMRA, that is the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. The PMRA reports to the Department of Health and is responsible for the registration of any chemical pesticide or herbicide for use in Canada.

The problem is that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency does not have the ability to react in a timely fashion. The bill fails to create that mechanism that would speed up the registration of proven low risk pesticides. The bill fails to create an effective mechanism that would speed up the registration of minor use pesticides.

Speeding up the registration of minor use and low risk pesticides would allow the PMRA to dictate more resources to studying more complex new pesticide applications. The bill does not call for an ombudsman or a proper oversight committee.

The two issues I talked about were the registration of new pesticides and minor use pesticides. In Canada we have an agricultural industry, a horticultural industry, a fruit industry, that unfortunately is a very small part of a very small market.

The agriculture committee just had the opportunity to travel across Canada from coast to coast. One of the issues that was consistent from coast to coast was the fact that we did not have the ability to react with respect to minor use registration of pesticides.

Right now in British Columbia there are not sufficient tools in that chemical chest to pull from that chest the proper pesticides to use on the product. However the United States, which is our major trading partner, has the ability to use many more chemicals and pesticides on products.

The irony here is that we can import a product of the Americans, having had them use a chemical which is not registered in Canada. The product may well have residue on it but it is perfectly all right to import that product. We in Canada can grow the same product but we cannot use the same chemical used by the Americans. In most cases we have to depend upon a chemical that is harsher than the chemical in the U.S., a chemical that we should and could be registered in Canada.

We believe very seriously that there must be a built in harmonization in the PMRA system. If the chemical can be used by one trading partner of ours in the United States, then we should be able to use that science to register the product in Canada. It would certainly assist our producers, both with the registration of product in general terms as well as minor use registration.

We talked about the inability to differentiate between the commercial and the cosmetic use of pesticides.

•(1335)

The bill does not speak to the cosmetic use. I assume it was left out by the government on purpose when drafting the legislation. It was suggested earlier by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre that the federal government should have indicated its desire to put forward a regulation or restriction on cosmetic pesticides.

I do not feel the same way. I believe very strongly that the municipalities have the right and should have the right to dictate to their own users, customers, clients and constituencies as to whether

there should or should not be the ability to use cosmetic pesticides in that municipality. The reason I say this is not that I am necessarily totally in favour of cosmetic pesticides, although I must admit, other than a few things in this House, dandelions really do infuriate me.

However I believe it is the right of municipalities to make that call, as they have with things like smoking bylaws. Municipalities have made the decision as to whether they should or should not allow smoking in public places. We have seen this in the city of Ottawa where it has decided that there will be no smoking in any public place. However constituencies of other municipalities decided there should be more open smoking bylaws.

I remember in another life I fought a battle with respect to Sunday shopping. That decision was made by the municipalities, not by the federal government or the provincial government. It is the individual municipalities, and their constituents, that should have the right to say what goes on in those areas. Therefore I do not have difficulty with not having the federal government place conditions in this legislation.

There are a couple of other areas that have been touched on in the legislation. The bill provides that any person may apply for a change in maximum residue limits for a product in the registration process. Maximum residue limits must be based on science. By allowing anyone to apply for an MRL for a pesticide confuses the nature of the registration process and allows for any interest group to apply for an MRL. Registration should be based on sound science and not on political procedure.

What this is saying, which I believe is wrong, is that any interest group or any contrary thought to the industry or any user group or stakeholder can simply come forward and ask for a change to the maximum residue limits. This will open up what I believe will be a number of frivolous situations where a lot of legitimate producers of pesticides and herbicides may well be chased out of the country.

That also ties into the special review section of the legislation. It says that, generally speaking, the special review section of the bill is poorly worded. The legislation fails to define the parameters under which a special review could be initiated. The minister is likely to be inundated with public requests for reviews. A request for a special review must be based on known or assumed product risk or scientific evidence. Unfortunately, this again lends itself to abuse when under special reviews anyone can come forward under any circumstance and simply stop a legitimate product from being produced and used in the marketplace.

The third area I have some concerns is the public access to confidential business information. The public will have access to confidential business information once a product has been approved. Members of the public will be able to view only confidential business information with ministerial approval, which we recognize may have its own flaws built into that process.

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Access to registry information is currently provided for within the Access to Information Act. The current regime also protects confidential business information. We suggest that it should go back to that area of access to information.

• (1340)

I go back to the agricultural community and its need and desire to deal with legitimate minor use registrants as well as registrants to new pesticides. The PMRA has deficiencies and it is important that we rectify those deficiencies or we will not have the ability to produce the way we produce today. It is important that the legislation deal with that regime and that we look at a serious harmonization process with respect to the United States and Canada particularly. Even beyond that we need a harmonization process that would encompass the globe because at the current time we trade globally. It is important that we have the ability to import and export products that would deal with the same types of pesticides.

Agriculture now accounts for 91% of the total use of pesticide sales in Canada. It is important that the legislation recognize a need for good logical pesticide regulations and we must have the stakeholders of agriculture involved in the legislation.

It used to be that young children would chase fog wagons. It used to be that farmers and producers perhaps did not have the same kind of care and caution when dealing with pesticides. That has changed quite dramatically.

Producers now know that pesticides and herbicides, chemicals of any sort, are very expensive. Therefore it is best to reduce the use of pesticides, not increase the use. It is better to use a better, more environmentally friendly product than one that is not environmentally friendly like we have seen in the past. Those pesticides have been taken off the market.

Producers want the ability to be able to have more choice in those chemicals and would like to be able to have a better opportunity to have some minor use registration. As producers farmers in Canada account for only 3% of the world total pesticide use. The United States accounts for 33% of the world pesticide use and 25% of the pesticide use is accounted for in western Europe. Canada is a very small player, but a player nonetheless, that must have good legislation.

The Progressive Conservative caucus will support the legislation going forward. We will vote to make sure it gets into committee because it should have been there at least 10 years ago and it is about time that it got to the committee level. The government was changing 10 years ago. If it could not put this legislation before us in 10 years then obviously there are more deficiencies than just this legislation. There are deficiencies in the government itself.

We support this going back to committee and hope, beyond hope, that the committee and the department will listen to valuable amendments that will be proposed by the Progressive Conservative Party.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my friend from the Conservative Party who spoke just a moment ago. He made some good points and I want to follow up a little on some of the points he

made and some of the points made by members of my own caucus about Bill C-53.

Just to remind colleagues in the House and people who are watching this on television, this is an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests. It was put forward by the Minister of Health.

The Canadian Alliance supports the legislation. It has been a long time coming. The last time we had anything done with this legislation was in 1969 when the original bill was introduced and very little has happened to it since that point. The Alliance supports many aspects of it but we do have some concerns. I want to run through a few of them right now.

As was pointed out a minute ago, about 91% of all pesticide use in Canada is by agriculture. As someone who comes from a rural riding where we obviously use pesticides on the farms, we want to have some say on these things.

The first thing I would point out is that a few years ago when the Pest Management Regulatory Agency came into being as a user fee based agency, one of the things people were hoping was that it would be run more like a business, that it would be more efficient, leaner and that it would approve the use of pesticides or turn them down, either way, in a much quicker way. However we found it to be completely the opposite.

When the government allowed the PMRA to go its own way it used those extra user fees to build a bigger bureaucracy and service actually got worse. It took much longer to approve the use of pesticides than previously and in fact the fees started to go up. The real concern in this legislation is that none of those things were addressed. The PMRA, in the eyes of a lot of people, is still not nearly as efficient and effective as it could be. Unfortunately that is something that simply was not addressed in this legislation.

There is one thing that would have helped a lot. In the legislation, any active ingredient in a chemical used in Canada which has triggered some kind of concern in another OECD country can then be reviewed by the minister to see if there are any health effects in Canada. We support that idea, but the corollary should be there as well, which is that if another OECD country, whose standards we respect, approves the use of a drug then why in the world should it have to go through the same process in Canada all over again? That is what happens. The member from the Tories spoke about that a moment ago, as have members of the Alliance.

What that does is effectively drive the cost of these chemicals up for farmers, which means that at a time when farmers are very hard pressed, after years of drought and low commodity prices, they have to pay ever more for chemicals. Why not use the standards of other countries whose science we respect, such as the United States, the U. K. and Europe?

If on the one hand their standards are good enough to trigger a review if we are concerned about safety, then on the other hand their standards should be good enough if those countries are approving a chemical. We think we need to expedite the process by taking into account the science that already has been done in these other countries. That is one of the amendments we would like to see made to the legislation.

We also would like to see the bill amended to include specific approval procedures for minor use chemicals. The member just spoke about that a few minutes ago and it is very important. It is also important that when this legislation is being proposed and done that we take into account the concerns of the agricultural community. Again, 91% of pesticide use is through agricultural producers. As I mentioned a minute ago one of the biggest concerns we have is the length of time it takes to approve new chemicals.

● (1345)

Somebody mentioned that drugs are often approved in other countries because it takes so long to approve them in Canada. This is not only true of chemicals through the PMRA, it is also true of drugs through Health Canada. Two things often happen. Either people have to forgo the use of effective chemicals and pay a very high price for that in the form of lost productivity on the farm or, as was pointed out, use chemicals that are actually much harsher but which have already been approved.

In other words, instead of using the ideal chemical to deal with a very specific pest, one that is newer and therefore probably more environmentally sensitive, people end up using older chemicals. We do not have a problem with the newer chemicals staying in the environment for a long time because they completely break down. That is another problem that we simply want to draw attention to.

We are comfortable as a party with the idea of a public registry. We believe it is only fair that if people have concerns about pesticides they can find out about them through online resources like the Internet.

On more inspections and higher fines up to \$1 million for violations, I want to point out that those are interesting components of the bill. When people use chemicals on their lands which have not been approved in Canada, the chemicals can drift over into somebody else's field. We all know stories of that happening and how it affects crops. The government is now prepared to impose a \$1 million fine for violations. Is it not interesting how that is distinct from how the government has approached the endangered species legislation? If the government comes in and steals one's livelihood by putting land out of bounds for one's own use, it is not compelled to provide any remuneration for doing that.

However in Bill C-53 the government is going out of its way to make sure inspections are done and huge fines are in place for anybody who uses chemicals that have not received approval through the government. I simply wanted to point to what I believe to be a contradiction between that bill and this bill.

All members of our party are very supportive of legislation that brings more transparency and scrutiny to the use of chemicals in the environment. However we want the government to be sensitive to the needs of the people who actually use these chemicals. The experts are people on the farm. Ninety-one per cent of pesticide use is on the farm. We urge the government to take into account the concerns of people on the farm.

I simply mention again that the PMRA is really a problem that has not been addressed in the bill. It still takes far too long and is much too expensive to get chemicals approved. We want the government to use the science of other countries whose science we respect as a

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guide to whether or not these products should be approved or in some cases turned down. We do not have any problem with them being turned down but it should be based on science.

Finally, we urge the government to be open to the idea of amendments. The Canadian Alliance is prepared to move amendments to the bill. We hope the government will understand that we are approaching the bill from a point of goodwill. We want to see effective legislation. I think the government will find that the Canadian Alliance will bring forward some very constructive amendments at committee stage.

● (1350)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when we were leaving southern Alberta there was a horrific windstorm. The residents said that there was more dust and dirt in the air than there was in the thirties.

Farming practices have improved dramatically over the years. One of the things that has enabled farmers to keep soil erosion down to a minimum is the use of some of the products that we are talking about that the pesticide management review agency has to deal with.

We have forced our agricultural producers to produce more and more from an acre of land to be able to meet their financial needs and by doing so we have certainly changed the way some farming is done but almost all of what has changed is for the good. The use of products, such as the ones we have mentioned here, is really necessary if we are to have a competitive agricultural sector in Canada.

Harmonization between ourselves and our closest trading partners is another issue. A lot of our agricultural producers produce the same thing and things are different on both sides of the border. I believe the PMRA is one of the agencies that needs to be very active in making sure that products are harmonized, that legislation and regulation on both sides of the border are the same. I would like my colleague to expand on that somewhat.

● (1355)

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Lethbridge makes a really good point by asking this question.

I will say that although it is springtime in my home town of Brooks, Alberta and we have had average snowfalls in the area, once the wind starts howling, especially in the hilltops, the soil dries up very quickly. A lot of moisture is drawn out of the ground and the dust starts to blow. I understand there was a terrible traffic accident north of Medicine Hat as a result of all of that dust blowing around.

However what has allowed us to actually keep the dust down to a large degree is the fact that we have been able to use no till practices that involve the use of herbicides. We do not have to summerfallow the field just to avoid the erosion problems we have had in the past.

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We have all seen the pictures from the thirties of great big sand dunes because of a lack of moisture and the farming practices of the time which made the land very susceptible to drifting and topsoil was lost as a result. That is not nearly the problem now that it used to be because of the different kinds of no till farming practices that involve the use of herbicides. It is very important that we still have the capacity to use those herbicides.

My friend also mentioned harmonizing with the United States. When we consider how expensive it is to go through a series of tests in the United States and have the FDA, for instance, approve all the tests that have to be done on various chemicals, which takes months if not years to do, those chemicals must go through the same process to come into Canada. That is crazy.

We should be using the tests that the Americans have. We should come to some kind of agreement on standardizing the procedures for approving not just the chemicals used in farming but all kinds of drugs as well, which is another issue. Certainly in this instance, for chemicals, why should we go through the whole process all over again which is just adding more years to the time it takes to develop the product, denying farmers the chance to use it in the meantime and adding all kinds of expense? Why should we do that when the information is already at hand?

We urge the government across the way to consider amendments that would take into account the science and the tests that have already been done in other countries to ensure that we can get these products into the hands of the users as quickly as possible.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during a recent parliamentary visit to Colombia, I had the pleasure of meeting with a number of our dedicated Canadian diplomats working overseas.

Take Derek Kunsken, for example. He is the second secretary at our embassy. In addition to his full time job, Derek spends endless hours volunteering at la Fundacion Renacer. This is a non-profit group operating in Colombia with the specific purpose of getting prostitutes who are minors off the streets and into educational programs.

Funded by Colombia, diplomats from the Canadian and British embassies offer their spare time to la fundacion and other humanitarian efforts.

I applaud the efforts of Derek Kunsken and our foreign service officers who make a special effort to represent the very best of Canadian values abroad.

* * *

HALDANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the staff, students and parent volunteers of Haldane Elementary School in Chase, British

Columbia will be holding their 12th annual Earth Day on April 19. The event has become a tradition.

Haldane Elementary conducts activities in the community which foster fellowship and environmental awareness. The nearly 300 grade 4 to 7 students involve themselves in many activities such as studying animal habitat, building and locating bird and bat houses, planting trees along Chase Creek, conducting community environmental awareness sessions, and painting images of fish on sewer drains to remind people that what they send down the drain ends up in the water system. The entire school dedicates this day to environmental awareness. It takes it one step further by contributing directly to improving the environment of Chase and the surrounding area.

I ask hon. members of the House to join with me in congratulating these young Canadians on their dedicated efforts to make our earth a better place for all of us to live.

* * *

● (1400)

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two environmental anniversaries this month. In 1987 the Bruntland report was released heralding a new way of thinking about global environment. In 1996 on April 24 the Wapusk, or polar bear, National Park was established in Manitoba.

Canada and Canadians are custodians of a huge part of the earth's surface on land, with 50% more territory in our oceans. Our national parks system is one of our greatest contributions to the natural heritage of the globe. These parks are our strongest tool in the protection of plant and animal species. They are sanctuaries for a deliberately diverse sample of our natural heritage.

I urge all members to help nurture our national parks system as one of Canada's key contributions to the new approach to global heritage laid out in the Bruntland report. As we do this let us continue to work at extending protection to parts of our ocean floor.

* * *

HARRY MACLAUHLAN

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Harry MacLauchlan, a prominent member of Prince Edward Island's business community who passed away on Wednesday, March 27.

From very modest beginnings Harry, through hard work, commitment, teamwork and a very positive attitude, built one of the province's largest business empires. His interests over the years spanned construction, hotels, retail, the local cable television company, real estate and other business developments.

Throughout his life Harry had three distinct traits: No matter what the weather was outside he greeted everyone with "It's a great day"; he generally did business with a handshake; and he always exhibited a contagious sense of optimism.

In addition to his many business interests Harry MacLauchlan was very much involved in the community. He served on many community organizations and fundraising initiatives. Several years ago he was appointed to the Prince Edward Island Business Hall of Fame.

On behalf of all Canadians I pay tribute to this great Canadian and extend our sympathies to his wife Marjorie, his five children and their families.

* * *

JUNO AWARDS

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for many when I say how proud I was to be a Canadian as I watched last night's Junos. The program was a great showcase of Canadian talent and a tribute to Canada's support for the performing arts.

It is fitting that the Junos are held in April since it is a month when young vocalists and musicians are stepping on school stages to perform in music festivals across Canada. Many of Canada's top entertainers gave their first public performances at these festivals.

I recognize the dedicated festival volunteers, teachers, and parents for the important role they play in Canadians' love for music. I believe it is Canadians' commitment to the performing arts, complemented by government funding, that has made Canadians rulers of the airwaves.

I congratulate Juno Award winners and nominees such as Nickelback, Diana Krall, Default, and Newfoundland's own Ennis Sisters for representing excellence on the nation's music stage.

I also congratulate the hosts of the Junos, the warm and friendly citizens of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador on the success of the event. This is only the third time the Junos have been held outside Toronto, and what better setting for a music award show than the rock, a place that truly rocks on the Canadian music scene.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, while the government is bungling the softwood lumber file the infestation of the mountain pine beetle continues to destroy B.C. forests. The Liberal government must not confuse the two crises and it must not ignore the damage being done by this huge beetle infestation.

The government has a constitutional responsibility for forests under federal jurisdiction. B.C. needs help dealing with the crisis for which a plan has already been developed, but we need a commitment from the other landowner. We need a commitment from the federal government.

The Minister of Natural Resources has already admitted the beetle poses a serious threat to B.C. forests. The minister must not be bullied by his cabinet colleagues into accepting that beetle damage to B.C.'s forestry industry is temporary, that EI programs can handle the jobs that will be lost, or that the Americans will accuse him of subsidizing the industry.

S. O. 31

The pine beetle will eat through the government's revenue pipeline from British Columbia.

* * *

HADASSAH-WIZO ORGANIZATION OF CANADA

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite the House to recognize the 85 years of great work and achievement of the Hadassah-WIZO Organization of Canada. Hadassah-WIZO was founded in 1917 as a non-political women's volunteer organization dedicated to the support of education, health care and social welfare programs for women and children in Israel. In Canada Hadassah-WIZO works closely with other organizations in the promotion of Canadian ideals of democracy and equality for all members of society.

Last night I had the distinct pleasure of attending the Hadassah-WIZO's 85th anniversary official launch celebrating 85 years of vision and achievement here on Parliament Hill. As part of the celebration the hon. Sheila Finestone and the hon. Wilbert Joseph Keon were presented with lifetime achievement awards.

I thank them very much and, especially at this time, I say shalom.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

CITY OF SAGUENAY

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 18, my city got bigger. In fact, the municipalities of Jonquière, Shipshaw, Laterrière, Lac-Kénogami, La Baie, Canton Tremblay and Chicoutimi merged to become one single city. Yesterday, the citizens of the new municipality chose a new name: the City of Saguenay.

This name represents a coming together for us. Each of the former municipalities had its strengths, but together, we are even stronger, with an even brighter future.

We chose the name City of Saguenay, which means "where the water flows from". Today, we are proud to tell all the world that we are big and that our name from this day forward is the City of Saguenay.

* * *

SOCIAL SECTOR

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a representative of our government, I was very pleased to announce major investments in social infrastructure on Friday, with funding for organizations from Jonquière such as Le Patro, the Association des parents d'ados, and the Le Séjour-Jonquière shelter.

I would like to highlight the co-operation of the Minister of Labour and Federal Coordinator on Homelessness, as part of this government's initiative to improve social infrastructure.

S. O. 31

The people from the riding of Jonquière can rely on the cooperation of our government and myself to further progress in many sectors of human activity, be it the industrial, cultural or social sector, as we have just seen.

* * *

[English]

ERNIE EVES

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the new premier of Ontario, the hon. Ernie Eves. Mr. Eves is today being sworn in as Ontario's 23rd premier.

Mr. Eves was first elected to the provincial legislature in 1981. His first victory was a cliffhanger. It was decided by a six vote margin. Nonetheless, his reputation for competence and dedication spread and he served his Parry Sound constituents with distinction and with ever growing pluralities at the polls for the next 20 years.

In 1995 Ernie Eves became finance minister of a province which had been left by 10 years of Liberal and NDP mismanagement with an annual deficit in excess of \$10 billion. Combining the bulldog determination and the deft touch that are his trademark, he balanced the province's books while delivering on the Common Sense Revolution pledge of a 30% tax cut.

Ontarians look to their new premier full of confidence in his leadership skills. Under his leadership our province will be an example to all of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

SALT LAKE CITY WINTER OLYMPICS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is proud to draw attention to the exceptional performances of its Canadian Olympic team at the Salt Lake City games.

The overall performance, a fourth ranking among the countries, and the 17 medals, six gold, three silver and eight bronze, have been a source of inspiration for all Canadians. We all celebrate this remarkable exploit.

On behalf of all our fellow citizens, I congratulate our athletes, coaches, volunteers and their families, who have shown that dreams can come true.

They are truly great ambassadors for Canada, and we want them to know how very grateful all Canadians are to them.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of first nations men and women voluntarily enlisted to serve their country in the second world war and the Korean conflict. After the war first nations veterans found that the benefits provided to the average Canadian soldier under the Veterans Charter were not available to them.

In 2000 the national round table on first nations veterans issues tabled a study called "A Search for Equity" which stated once and for all that first nations veterans did in fact suffer discrimination and that financial compensation should be provided to each veteran or estate to recognize these losses in economic and educational opportunities.

First nations veterans have been waiting fifty years for justice and equality. I call upon the Minister of Veterans Affairs to act immediately to give remedy to this historic injustice. Fifty years is long enough. First nations veterans are now elderly and many have passed away. Those remaining deserve to be recognized in their lifetimes. I call upon parliament to give first nations veterans the equal recognition and compensation they so richly deserve.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

WINTER OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I wish to congratulate all of the athletes and coaches present here on the Hill who took part in the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Salt Lake City.

Sport instills solid values, whether in victory or in defeat. Thanks to their perseverance, their discipline, their determination and their numerous sacrifices, they have turned their dreams into reality. As we are all aware, the heights of excellence they have attained are not merely that they have won Olympic medals; they are also in the gift of themselves and their full potential.

They give hope to the young people who are just starting out in sports, whether or not they ever end up on a podium. They are a source of inspiration and pride to us. They are supreme role models and inspirations to our young people. Our most sincere congratulations to them, one and all. Bravo.

* * *

[English]

2002 WINTER PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to underline the great accomplishments of the Canadian Paralympic team which brought home a total of 15 medals of which 6 were gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze from the Salt Lake City winter games.

This was a record number of gold medals for Canada at a winter Paralympic games and earned us a prestigious place in the medal count. Canada placed 6th overall, representing a significant improvement from our 15th place position at the Winter Paralympic Games in Nagano in 1998.

Among our numerous Canadian medalists we find: Daniel Wesley from New Westminster, B.C.; Karolina Wisniewska from Calgary; Lauren Woolstencroft from Victoria, B.C.; and Brian McKeever from Canmore, Alberta. Ms Woolstencroft also received the Whang Youn Dai award, the first Canadian to win this prestigious prize.

I congratulate all the athletes, coaches and staff who so proudly represented Canada and who are exceptional role models for the youth of Canada.

* * *

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House to pay tribute to Canadian Olympians and Paralympians.

Who can forget Captain Cassie Campbell in the women's Olympic victory over the Americans, Mario draped in the Canadian flag surrounded by his victorious countrymen, or Daniel Wesley who won a medal of each colour? I am sure no one will ever forget Sale and Pelletier and the amazing Catriona LeMay Doan. All the medalists, competitors and coaches earned our pride and our admiration.

The sense of unity and purpose that both Paralympians and Olympians give us is immeasurable, but more importantly we congratulate the spirit of those who dedicate their time and effort and all those who represent this great nation of ours on the international stage. Canadian athletes set new standards at both events, winning 15 medals at the Paralympics and 17 at the Olympics.

Today we will debate a new sports act in the House. I believe it is imperative that we find the resources to encourage our youth to become more physically active and perhaps one day be future Olympians. Canadians want to see more arenas, playgrounds and greater access for underprivileged children. Developing the skill it takes to achieve the Olympic dream begins on the playgrounds and rinks outside our homes.

It is with pleasure that we congratulate all the Canadian Olympians with us today.

* * *

THE PRIME MINISTER

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister tomorrow will travel to New York to be named the East-West Institute's statesman of the year. The Prime Minister has been selected as dean of the G-8 where he has worked to broaden the G-8 agenda, notably the inclusion of Russia. He is also being recognized for his work in pioneering the G-8 effort to engage forward thinking governments' efforts in Africa.

This is recognition of not only the Prime Minister's leadership and skills. It is above all an honour for Canada and an endorsement of the progressive values profoundly shared by all Canadians.

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REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week President Bush denounced all forms of human

cloning. "Life is a creation, not a commodity", he said. Sadly, science fiction is quickly becoming science fact.

Early last week it was reported that the first cloned baby was on its way. Late last week scientists linked to a group in Quebec claimed to have already implanted cloned embryos in women. If they are experimenting here, there is no federal law to stop them.

On Friday we asked the government to assure us that cloning experiments were not taking place in Canada. We received no such assurance. It is imperative that legislation on cloning and research on human embryos be debated in the House as soon as possible. There are groups out there intent on cloning humans, and the CIHR has pre-empted parliament by saying that research on embryos can go ahead.

Parliament must be heard on these life and death matters, and this time legislation must not be allowed to die on the order paper.

* * *

● (1415)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Stephen Kakfwi, Premier, the Hon. Jim Antoine, Deputy Premier and the Hon. Joseph Handley, Government House Leader, all from the Northwest Territories.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to welcome the Prime Minister back to the House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Reynolds: We will see how they like it from here on in.

The Speaker: Order, please. We will want to hear the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure about that. I hope he did not have any aircraft problems on his trip to Africa because his cabinet has been having some in the past week trying to explain why the government's priorities are so out of whack.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. Since we have not been able to get a satisfactory answer from his ministers, could the Prime Minister explain to Canadians why spending \$101 million for two luxury executive jets was a priority for his government?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they replace two jets that were 19 years old and they needed to be replaced. In fact, the American government just spent \$2.4 billion to buy 20 Gulfstream of the same nature to do the same type of work in the United States. I think we have been very modest.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to answer some serious questions about the use of tax dollars to buy these luxury jets. The government broke its own rules for sole source contracting. It rushed this purchase through the entire machinery of government in only 10 days. It did not bother to bring this matter to cabinet.

Could the Prime Minister clear up something? Who ordered the planes and who made the decision to buy these planes? If it was not his cabinet, was it himself?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the rules were followed. It was a decision of the government to buy these planes. These planes are Canadian made, just like the Americans bought 20 planes that were made in America.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised in 1975, and I quote:

I will continue to exercise the greatest possible degree of restraint. There will be considerable belt-tightening in Ottawa. I can assure you that all departments are aware of the sharp axe in the hands of the Treasury Board.

Now we learn he orders the jet to fly empty from Ottawa across the river to the executive airport in Gatineau. The Prime Minister saves about 10 minutes that way.

Could the Prime Minister explain why he is so determined to waste precious tax dollars just to save himself a few minutes drive time in the limousine?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not the pilot and I am not the one who calls for the airplanes when I travel. The travelling of the Prime Minister is decided for security by the RCMP which decides which plane I am taking and where I am going.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian taxpayer is paying \$101 million for these luxury jets for the Prime Minister. The Canadian Alliance contacted an aircraft broker, somebody who deals in planes all the time, and for two Challenger 604 jets the price was \$77 million.

My question for the Prime Minister is this. Why is the Canadian taxpayer getting hosed by this aircraft deal?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact that is the price we paid.

[Translation]

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, why pay \$25 million more for the same aircraft, the same technology by the same company?

Is this not the same person who criticized the buying of luxury aircraft in the past?

Could the Prime Minister tell us when the little guy from Shawinigan became the big Gucci boy?

•(1420)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as regards aircraft, the cost is the one that I mentioned earlier in the House of Commons. Of course, the hon. member opposite forgot to add certain other costs.

The hon. member tells us that these are very luxurious aircraft, or something to that effect, but I should remind him that the leader of the opposition does not agree with him.

In February and October 1999, when he climbed on board a Challenger, he did not think it was too luxurious for him.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1997, Canada made a commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 6% of the 1990 level.

At that time, the Prime Minister went so far as to state, and I quote, "The human economic costs attributable to these climatic changes are too high for us not to act now". Yet three years later, Canadian emissions have increased by 20% and the ministers are even lobbying against the ratification of Kyoto.

Given the major impact of global warming on future generations, is the Prime Minister going to declare without any sidestepping of the issue that Canada is going to ratify the Kyoto protocol in 2002 as it promised?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised that we were going to do what was required to ratify the agreement. There must be discussions with the provinces and there must also be a clear assessment of what costs we will have to accept when we do sign.

At this point in time, discussions are being held with the provinces, and a cost-benefit analysis of the proposal is being done. When we have all the data in hand, we will make the decision. I believe, however, that it is very important for Canada to be in a position to be able to sign Kyoto some day.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some day could be in any year. The question was in 2002, since the commitment was to do it next year. Now we are being told some day. Canada keeps on backing down. I have already referred to the ministerial lobbying against Kyoto. Some are telling us it is desirable, others that it is not. The Minister of the Environment has raised the possibility of non-ratification.

Could we get more specific here, and would the Prime Minister not give us some day but rather a clear commitment, a precise time to the effect that "We will be signing Kyoto this year, 2002, some day in 2002"?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not a week goes by, not a day goes by, that the opposition does not ask us to consult the provinces. When we do consult the provinces and the private sector, then they fault us for not imposing a decision.

Oral Questions

In my opinion, it is logical within a federation, when a large part of the responsibility falls to the provinces, to consult them before proceeding. We feel that Kyoto is very important and would like to be in a position to sign as soon as possible, but first the necessary consultations must be held.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should realize that his government has been consulting, and verifying, that his ministers have been talking with each other, for quite a while now. And the problem we are facing is this: while he was outside Canada, his ministers, the Minister of Industry, the Minister of Natural Resources, officially contradicted one another, contradicted the Minister of the Environment. That is what has the public worried. The Prime Minister says one thing, and his ministers say another.

Will the Prime Minister tell us whether there is a clear government policy? Will he tell us what it is?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear. The government's decision is to carry out the necessary consultations with the governments. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity this afternoon to speak with the leader of the Northwest Territories, which are also involved because they wish to build pipelines in the north and market their natural resources. In a federation such as ours, preliminary consultations are necessary.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our responsibility, of course, is to leave the environment in good shape for the generations to come. This is why it is absolutely essential that the Kyoto accord be signed and implemented.

My supplementary for the Prime Minister is simply this: given what he has just told us, will he at least rein in his ministers of industry and natural resources, because they are causing the public great concern? He should rein them in.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no need to rein the ministers in. This issue is still evolving right now. And in society, as in our government, all possible aspects are considered before a decision is taken.

The interests of one may differ from those of others. The day will come when the government has to take a decision and, when it does, it will be unanimous as usual.

• (1425)

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Prime Minister. I think it is clear that overwhelmingly Canadians want the government to ratify Kyoto and get on with implementing a national plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

My own city of Halifax has joined a hundred other municipalities endorsing Kyoto ratification, unanimously in fact. Yet the environment minister is now turning himself inside out and upside down to rationalize his way out of ratification.

Now we hear from the Prime Minister that maybe one day. Is that the same thing as saying that the Prime Minister now ratifies the environment minister's non-ratification position?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised that the leader of the NDP would ask a question

like that because the premier of Saskatchewan told me that he has an interest in it. He said that it is very important for Canada to try to get credit for the export of clean energy to the Americans. It is not only there. There is the same interest in other provinces: Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. All the provinces have the same interest. It is normal for us to have consultations.

I am happy to know from the leader of the opposition that the day we make a decision she claims we should not pay attention to the provinces. It is perhaps good advice.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is what now parades as leadership from the government. Of course the provinces are asking where the national implementation plan is. There was a day when the government was saying it was going to be a leader in Kyoto. Then it became "by June 2002 we are going to ratify". Then it became "by the end of 2002".

[*Translation*]

Now, the government says "Perhaps some day".

[*English*]

What happened to the leadership that the government was going to give in bringing in a national implementation plan based on consultation and get on with ratifying Kyoto?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fine, the advice of the NDP is not to pay attention to any provincial government or to any interests in society at all. I will listen to their advice but I am more flexible than the NDP. I like to consult before acting.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1993 the Prime Minister said that he travelled the country by bus in order to hear the opinions of Canadians. He obviously is not interested in listening to Canadians anymore because he is spending over \$100 million of their money to buy luxury jets for his personal use. It took cabinet 10 days to order these new jets for the Prime Minister and our Canadian military has waited almost 10 years for new helicopters.

Will the Prime Minister return to Earth, cancel the order for the flying Taj Mahals and put the money toward our troops that need it or has the little guy from Shawinigan truly become the sultan of Shawinigan?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I travel internationally, I travel on a military defence plane. I cannot use the Challengers because I have the pleasure of having the press travelling with me all the time and there is no place for them in the Challenger unless I put them in the toilet. Of course I do not want to do that because I have too much fun talking with them and hearing them praise me for the quality of the food that defence offers to them.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, there are people in the Canadian armed forces who would believe that answer should be flushed in the toilet.

The commanding officer of a squadron that flies the Prime Minister said that the existing jets are “in excellent condition”. The chief of the defence staff says that there are no problems with our Challengers. The Prime Minister is ignoring the views of the military and listening to his own rock star sized ego. He even uses government jets for holiday travel, flying to Florida, Jamaica and Italy.

Why is the Prime Minister's desire for imperial style vacation travel defeating the interests of the Canadian armed forces and the interests of the Canadian taxpayers?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP does not authorize the Prime Minister to travel on commercial flights. That is why I travel, when I go on holidays, on these jets.

However I want to say to the hon. member that before making a lot about this, the reality is that the Americans bought 20 planes for executive travel at a cost of \$2.4 billion. For the whole cabinet, we have four jets in Canada. These new planes will permit the ministers to go to many places they were unable to go before, and will be useful in going to the small places in Canada. They are happy they will be able to do that.

• (1430)

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we hope they will visit British Columbia a little more often.

My question is for the minister of public works. He said to my colleague, when he said that we had an order for planes and we could get them for \$77 million, that that was what they paid for them and he got great applause. Yet on March 28 his own department released a press release saying they acquired two Challenger 604 aircraft at a cost of \$100.9 million. Where is the difference of \$25 million?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually the amount is \$76.4 million so it is even cheaper than the quote of the broker friend of the right hon. member across. It is \$76.4, plus the parts, plus the infrastructure, plus the pilot training, plus taxes, which totals \$101 million. It is called mathematics.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it seems they are building another Taj Mahal over there. It would seem that the former member of the rat pack is now part of the fat pack.

Could he explain what is extra? He is right that we rounded the figure out just like we did \$101 million. Could he explain exactly,

not parts since these planes come with parts, what are the extras that make it cost an additional \$25 million?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the normal procurement process. Let me do it again for the hon. member.

The two planes are \$38.2 million each. That is \$76.4 million plus the extra parts, a one year process that is normal in any acquisition of this kind, plus pilot training, plus other associated costs, plus taxes. The total is \$101 million.

That is the way it is. It is mathematics. The member can check it out with his seatmate and his broker friend. That is the way it works.

* * *

[Translation]

THE MIDDLE EAST

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the German peace plan includes the following: securing a lasting ceasefire and withdrawal from the occupied territories; quickly creating a Palestinian state and launching a global negotiation process that would include the dismantling of Jewish settlements; stopping the use of violence and punishing terrorist acts and aspirations; guaranteeing the involvement of the international community in the plan's implementation.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs agree with the main features of this plan?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government has always made it clear that it supports all the principles stated by the German government, which are to respect UN resolution 1402, to return to the negotiation table and to support Mr. Powell in his increasingly important role.

The only problem I have is that this is not a formal plan. These are only ideas put forward by my counterpart, Mr. Fischer. We support Mr. Fischer and Mr. Powell in any attempt to achieve peace in the Middle East.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the European Union's Ministers of Foreign Affairs approved the German plan, and they also expressed their support for Colin Powell's mediation initiative.

However, they said that they agreed with this plan to determine the objective that must be pursued by Colin Powell.

Is the minister also prepared to say loud and clear what mediation and peace objectives must be pursued for the Middle East?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always said that our objective is to support Mr. Powell.

Oral Questions

Mr. Powell wants the UN resolution to be respected and a return to negotiations based on the Tenet and Mitchell plans, which clearly show the way to peace.

The important thing right now is that the violence must stop and the parties must resume negotiations. This is what we have to focus on. This is what the Canadian, German and American governments, and the whole world, are hoping for.

* * *

[*English*]

LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGNS

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister seems to have forgotten the importance of transparency and accountability in public life. Twelve years ago when he was first running for the Liberal leadership he said:

I believe that the only answer is full disclosure so there is no possibility that the Canadian people will not know everything that is going on.

Now that he is running for the leadership again, and this time serves as finance minister, will he return to the standard he set 12 years ago and table a list of those with whom Jim Palmer was paid by the Department of Finance to consult, and the list of those who donated to his secret Liberal leadership campaign fund? This is his chance to walk his talk. Will he do it?

• (1435)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Palmer on behalf of the department consulted with a wide number of people and then made advice available to the department. The department is in the process of assessing the situation.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, full disclosure was the minister's standard but he cowers behind the Deputy Prime Minister or the ethics counsellor. It seems that he has something to hide.

He said Canadians have to know what is going on. They do not know what is going on with the minister and the connection between his department and his leadership campaign financing.

Now that the stakes are higher and he has some control over the public purse, why will the minister not live up to his own ethical standards and disclose these lists?

The Speaker: The Chair has great difficulty with that question. It does not appear to deal with the departmental responsibilities of the minister. I believe therefore it is out of order.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to Radio-Canada's own figures, there are one and a half times more permanent employees in Ontario than in Quebec.

Without interfering in the negotiations, does the Minister of Canadian Heritage not think that it is about time to send a clear political message to Radio-Canada, when there are one and a half times more employees in Quebec without job security than in Ontario?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member is asking me not to interfere in the negotiations, I am happy to follow her advice.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that was not the point of my question. I do not want the minister to take a position on the negotiations. I want her to say whether she agrees that employees who do not have job security are more vulnerable to the potential whims of an employer who might wish to impose his or her views to the detriment of journalistic objectivity.

The minister should show some compassion, leave the negotiations out of this, and tell us whether or not employees with no job security are being discriminated against.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am happy to follow the member's advice and not interfere in the negotiations.

However, I think that all Canadians, particularly those who have been tuning into Radio-Canada for years, would encourage both sides to return to the bargaining table to ensure that Quebec's broadcasters can take their rightful place among the best broadcasters in the world.

* * *

[*English*]

LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGNS

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the lack of ethics of the government and the use of taxpayers' money.

The would-be successors to the Prime Minister make it appear as though the taxpayers' money is supporting their leadership bids. First it was the finance minister, now it is the minister of heritage with her own conflict.

Joe Thornley, whose company Thornley Fallis is under contract with the minister's department, held a \$500 a plate fundraising dinner for her just last week.

What is happening here is wrong. Why did she do it?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have more questions about it and I am informed that Mr. Wilson has sent me a proposition to have some rules.

We have to be fair. They are just coming from their convention. We have not heard anything about all the money that was raised from anybody, so they should not attack us for that.

There is no leadership on this side and there will be someone—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: If ever I were to go I think that there might be a few who would like to take over. It is normal.

The ministers are doing their jobs very well. I think we will have some guidelines to make sure that there is no conflict between their jobs as ministers and the leader—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me the problem here is the Prime Minister and the heritage minister are kind of caught between a rock and a martini but it is the Canadian taxpayer who is suffering.

The answer is very simple. Will the ministers, whose departments let the contracts, reveal the names and the contracts of the people who are supporting them? It is that simple. There is nothing profound here.

• (1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a reality that everybody on this side, and some in the corner there, are all members of parliament. We all have the right to raise money for our next election. So members of the cabinet, members of the caucus have the right to have fundraising in all their ridings like any other member of the House of Commons.

The money that is raised for the riding, receipts are given. It is documented and the list of contributors giving above \$100 is always made public at the end of the year.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

A study by a University of Toronto professor shows that Canada is squandering the talents of skilled immigrants. The cost to our economy is \$15 billion a year.

What is the minister doing to make sure that qualified professionals, like doctors, can work in the areas in which they are trained and in which there are shortages?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is the most important question of the day.

It is a step by step approach. In the fall, for the first time there will be a federal, provincial and territorial conference. We will talk about provincial co-operation and about equivalence and credentials. Right now there is a process where by the end of June we will have through the regulation certain questions answered.

I think that it is everybody's business on both sides of the House. It is probably one of the most important questions, especially since the new census.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the \$101 million spent on two airplanes to support the imperial travel style of the Prime Minister.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why officials of three different departments recommended against the purchase? Will he table that information in the House? Can he also tell us once and for all, why do the Liberals need two planes? Is it one plane for the Prime Minister and one plane for his ego?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the fleet of planes, all

Challengers of course, there are actually four, not two. These two planes replace two of the older ones for a grand total of four, just like we had before. They are not luxurious.

The hon. member's own leader flew on it once. I know because I requisitioned the jet for her.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Earlier this month a Canadian businessman, James Sabzali, was the first foreign national to be convicted under the U.S. trading with the enemy act. His crime was selling water purification supplies for the people of Cuba.

What action is the minister taking to strongly protest this outrageous attack by the United States on a Canadian citizen whose only crime was to obey Canadian law?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the House that we take this matter very seriously. We are in contact with Mr. Sabzali's lawyers to make sure that we make all representations possible for the Government of Canada.

I want to remind the House however, that this gentleman was convicted not only for activities which he conducted in Canada, but the majority of activities for which he was convicted were when he was in the United States and in the jurisdiction of United States laws and courts. This makes this case somewhat more complicated than other cases that we have had to face in the past. However, I want to assure the member and the House that we will follow it closely and give every aid we can to this Canadian citizen and his problem.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans practically accused me of lying to the House in relation to the cargo of fish landed in Newfoundland by the Russian trawler *Tynda*. I presume the minister has now seen the manifest. I have a copy.

I ask him, how long can Canada sit back and see redfish the size of one's thumb, turbot the size of a coke bottle and species such as cod and American plaice which are under moratorium being scooped up by foreign trawlers while our plants are closed and Canadians are unemployed?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

My officials checked the manifest. They verified with the vessel and investigations are continuing. However there were no NAFO regulations nor Canadian regulations contravened.

This matter is important in light of the requests that have been made by the member's colleague that I increase by 3,000 tonnes the redfish quota. There are no regulations on that one. We believe it should be brought under NAFO regulations and therefore we do not think it would be wise to increase that quota.

•(1445)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister constantly defends the indefensible, NAFO. He says there was no illegal fishing involved with the boat.

When well over half the catch was still in an unprocessed state, where did the fish come from to make 80,000 pounds of fishmeal when one-half million pounds of raw material will be required to create such an amount of finished product?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I point out that we are continuing to do the investigation. There is no information to date that we have uncovered from the manifest or from the visit to show that there was anything untoward. The best way we can work to manage the resource properly and to have sustainable fishing on the nose and the tail of the Grand Banks is to work with our partners who fish there from NAFO.

I met today with the ambassador for the European Union. I will meet with the commissioner of fisheries and make sure that we all work toward the same goals.

* * *

LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGNS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance has repeatedly asked that the ethics counsellor table his rules and guidelines as well as table all investigations into potential or real conflicts of interest.

We understand Mr. Wilson recently met with the Prime Minister to discuss new guidelines for placing restrictions on contracts with cabinet ministers who aspire to be Prime Minister some day.

Will the Prime Minister live up to his promise of a more open and accountable government by tabling the results of the ethics counsellor's recent investigations into conflicts as well as the new guidelines?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not have any discussion myself with Mr. Wilson on this subject. I am told that he has sent me some prospects for guidelines. I will read them and discuss with him what we should do.

I have to tell the hon. member that when they had their leadership convention a few weeks ago, they had the same problems that members of this party will have when there is a leadership convention. It is something that is out of the operations of cabinet. It is the normal process in a democracy to have a leadership convention. The rules should be the same for the opposition as they are for the party that governs.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the distinction is clear. It is cabinet ministers who have control over the public purse. There is a clear distinction between that side and opposition members. That is politics 101.

The pursuit of ethical government is not a private matter to be discussed between Liberal fundraisers and cabinet ministers. The office of the ethics counsellor falls within the Minister of Industry's portfolio. The minister, who is himself an unofficial leadership candidate, could radically improve Liberal standards and define his

Oral Questions

own leadership style by improving the transparency and accountability of the government.

I ask the Minister of Industry: Will he ask the ethics counsellor to table the results of recent investigations as well as the new guidelines?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that opposition members think they will never be ministers so they are not too preoccupied about the eventual conflict of interest. I thank them very much for already conceding the result of the next election.

As I just said, yes, Mr. Wilson is writing to me. He is making some suggestions. I will look at them and I will see what can be done. There will be guidelines. When the guidelines are ready, I will be very happy to make them public.

* * *

[Translation]

SPORTS

Mr. Robert Laucôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the last National Summit on Sport, in April 2001, the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport established a number of committees responsible for making recommendations to help athletes. These committees have been at work for close to a year. Even though the issues have been known for a long time, so far nothing concrete has emerged from these committees.

How long will athletes have to wait to get the funding promised by the secretary of state?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Government of Canada has always supported our athletes. We are constantly reviewing our obligations and resources.

As the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, I always try to convince my colleagues that it is time to support our athletes. I can assure the hon. member that I will continue to do so.

•(1450)

Mr. Robert Laucôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not just beginning. The time has come to provide resources and funding. The time has come to act. Athletes, coaches, officials and sports federations need more resources. The government can no longer hide behind its piecemeal approach, which targets specific areas.

What concrete action will the government take to ensure promising athletes do not give up their career because of a lack of adequate financial means?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not just a matter of funding or resources. The government is working with the provinces and territories, as it did two weeks ago in Iqaluit regarding the Canadian sport policy, to make sure that they accept our policy.

It is really disappointing that the hon. member would engage in petty politics today, when we have a delegation of athletes with us.

Oral Questions

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has made it very clear in the House a number of times that Canada's ratification of the Kyoto protocol depends, among other things, on obtaining credits for clean energy exports to the United States. This weekend the G-8 made it clear that Canada will not receive any such credits. There will be no more concessions.

My question is for the Minister of the Environment. It is now clear that Canada cannot meet the terms of the Kyoto protocol without significant economic damage. Will he abandon his unachievable plan and negotiate a reasonable North American agreement instead?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, much of the preface to the hon. member's question is incorrect because of course the G-8 is not a strictly European organization.

The European commissioner for the environment, Ms. Wallstrom, did indicate her concern on the issue of clean energy exports, but let me point out that clean energy exports reduce the amount of CO₂ that goes into the atmosphere and therefore help achieve the goals of Kyoto and of the Rio convention on climate change.

We think that the Europeans should stop judging before the information is in and recognize we have a UN sponsored conference in Whistler next month to consider that very issue. At this point there is no formal Canadian proposal on the table.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that credit for clean energy exports was a myth and the bubble has burst.

It is also clear that there is no provincial or industry support for the ratification of Kyoto. Cabinet is divided on the issue and now the special cabinet committee appointed by the Prime Minister himself has studied the implications of this protocol and has come out opposed to the agreement.

Will the minister heed the wise advice of his colleagues and abandon the Kyoto protocol in favour of a realistic, made in Canada solution?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member gets in trouble by putting forward inaccurate preambles to his questions.

The province of Alberta is at one with the Government of Canada in seeking to obtain clean energy export credits. That is a matter of record, which the minister of the environment for Alberta, the Hon. Lorne Taylor, repeated last weekend when he was with me at a dinner of the G-8 ministers.

I honestly do not understand where the hon. member gets his information for the preambles to his questions. It makes his questions appear ill-prepared.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Secretary of State Colin Powell is in Lebanon and Syria today to persuade these governments to stop supporting Hezbollah, which has been attacking Israel relentlessly since last week.

This government continues to allow Hezbollah to fundraise in Canada. Will Canada finally act and put an end to Hezbollah's fundraising activities in this country, or will Colin Powell have to come here to persuade the government to do so?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained in the House in the past, this government does not fund Hezbollah. This government allows some Canadian citizens to send money to an arm of Hezbollah that supports doctors, lawyers and politicians in Lebanon who are working to restore peace. We do not want to kill the chance of peace by putting institutions that might be worthwhile on the list.

I remind my friend that he was wrong the other day, when he said that France had put Hezbollah on the list, because this is not true.

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the secretary-general of the United Nations has confirmed that Israel has complied with UN resolution 425 and has withdrawn from Lebanese territories. Yet the chairman of Hezbollah, as they continue to fire rockets at innocent civilians, said that they will always be opposed to "normalization" of relations with Israel; in other words, ongoing attacks despite the fact that Israel has withdrawn. The chairman of Hezbollah also talks about foundations that are set up to raise money for terrorist activities.

Will the minister commit, along with the evidence I presented to him last week from the RCMP and CSIS and evidence today, to ban these foundations in Canada from raising money—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why the government has listed and bans any fundraising for military activities of Hezbollah in this country. My friend makes the point precisely as to what our policy is about. We are not, however, going to stop doctors and politicians from doing their work to try to bring peace. Let us work constructively where we may and let us ban those activities which we know will lead to more violence. That is precisely what the government is doing.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Via Rail is currently in the process of replacing its fleet of locomotives. The diesel engines built by GEC ALSTOM in Montreal are very environmentally friendly. But its plants are not operating at capacity.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister of Transport introduce corporate tax incentives which will unblock such products, particularly since GEC ALSTOM is in danger of closing for lack of orders?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is up to Via Rail management to decide on the type of equipment they want for their lines.

I am, however, prepared to discuss the matter with the president of Via Rail.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister of fisheries has to realize that NAFO is not protecting Canadian fishing industries. Communities in his own province are dying because foreign trawlers continue to devastate fish stocks.

A Russian trawler caught 247 tonnes of undersized redfish, the same species that the minister refused to grant access to Canso and Mulgrave for processing. Not illegal, the minister says, but under NAFO redfish quota is not regulated nor is net size. Talk about catch and release.

How does the minister reconcile the lax rules and regulations of NAFO while ignoring, refusing—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that when I met with the owner of the Seafreez plant in Canso he specifically asked for 3-O redfish because, he said, he has one of the only markets in North America that can handle that very tiny fish.

That stock is small. It is not the same size as the stock of the rest of the Grand Banks and it does fall without the regulations of NAFO. The best way to protect our resources on the nose and the tail there is to work without NAFO because otherwise we would have nothing.

* * *

[Translation]

HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 21, the member for Madawaska—Restigouche said in the House, and I quote:

On a number of occasions in the past, the Prime Minister has indicated that this highway project was a priority for his government. The people back home remember this and they feel the time has come to stop talking about the project and to start taking steps to make it happen: a four lane highway from Rivière-du-Loup, in Quebec, to Fredericton, in New Brunswick.

Will the government finally announce that it plans to invest in the upgrading of highway 185, a project in which Quebec has already invested \$225 million?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said in the House, there are many programs for funding highways throughout the country and in the Province of Quebec.

We are currently holding discussions with Quebec's Minister of Transport. I hope that an agreement will soon be reached so that the state of highways in the Province of Quebec can be improved.

* * *

[English]

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has recently indicated its intention to sell off its fleet of 13,000 hopper cars later this year. A previous government purchased these cars many years ago, first, so that Canada could meet its export commitments and, second, to keep transportation costs reasonable for western grain and oilseed farmers.

What assurances can the Minister of Transport give the House that the continued ability to export product and benefits accruing to western farmers will be front and centre when this fleet is put on the auction block later this year?

● (1500)

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that the demand is such that these hopper cars when sold will certainly be in use for the transportation of grain. We do not believe that the actual ownership will affect their utilization.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the United States congress is considering a bill that would cripple our country's agricultural sector. The bill would severely affect our exports at the border, all under the guise of safety from agri-terrorism. Our exporters would have to notify the border up to 12 hours in advance of shipments. This would activate any number of random inspections, preventing our products from getting to the American market.

This action is nothing short of protectionism. What is the minister of trade doing to stop this injustice and what is his game plan for when our agricultural exports grind to a halt?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a meeting last Wednesday in Washington with the deputy secretary of health, I raised that issue clearly and suggested that rather than put that type of concern into legislation they put it into regulation. In that way they could recognize the virtual equivalency that we have between our two countries and not necessitate another piece of paperwork for the 10,000 truckloads of food that go back and forth between our countries each day. He said he would take that into full consideration. We will keep reminding him of our concern.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Wednesday, April 10, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to recognize our Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

*Routine Proceedings***CANADA'S OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES**

(House in committee of the whole to recognize Canada's 2002 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Games athletes.)

[*Editor's Note: And Canada's 2002 Olympic and Paralympic athletes being present in the Chamber*]

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Milliken): Order, please. I would like to draw to your attention the presence in our Chamber of Canada's winter Olympic and Paralympic medalists.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to their determination and their professionalism, these athletes have been excellent ambassadors for Canada. We also want to congratulate those medallists who could not be here today.

[*English*]

I would like to invite all hon. members to join me in showing our appreciation of their efforts, which have been a source of great pride for all Canadians.

Present with us today are, representing the alpine ski team: Scott Patterson, Daniel Wesley, Chris Williamson, Bill Harriott, Karolina Wisniewska and Lauren Woolstencroft.

Representing the cross country ski team are: Brian McKeever and Robin McKeever.

Representing the curling teams are: Don Bartlett, Kevin Martin, Carter Rycroft, Ken Tralberg, Don Walchuk, Kelly Law, Diane Nelson, Cheryl Noble, Julie Skinner and Georgina Wheatcroft.

Representing the figure skaters are: David Pelletier and Jamie Salé.

Representing the freestyle ski team are: Veronica Brenner and Deidra Dionne.

[*Translation*]

Representing the women's hockey team are: Dana Antal, Kelly Béchar, Jennifer Botterill, Thérèse Brisson, Isabel Chartrand, Lori Dupuis, Danielle Goyette, Geraldine Heany, Jayna Hefford, Becky Kellar, Caroline Ouellette, Cherie Piper, Cheryl Pounder, Tammy Lee Shewchuk, Kim Saint-Pierre, Sami Jo Small, Colleen Sostorics and Vicky Sunohara.

• (1510)

Representing the speed skating team are: Éric Bédard, Marc Gagnon, Jonathan Guilmette, François-Louis Tremblay, Mathieu Turcotte, Isabelle Charest, Amélie Goulet-Nadon, Clara Hughes, Alanna Kraus and Tania Vicent.

[*English*]

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Editor's Note: And Canada's 2002 Olympic athletes having left the Chamber.*]

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Milliken): There is one other Olympic medalist in the committee who I neglected to mention, the Minister of the Environment, silver medal for rowing at the 1960 Olympic Games.

An informal reception in honour of the athletes hosted by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Secretary of State for Amateur Sport will be held in the reading room, Room 237-C at 3.30 p.m. All hon. members are invited to attend.

* * *

• (1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services quoted from a document regarding airplane costs. I would like him to table that document.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from my briefing note. I would gladly find the document giving the details of what the hon. member is seeking. I will endeavour to table it by the end of the week if it is available to me.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

DAIRY TERMS ACT

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-440, an act respecting the use of dairy terms.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to introduce this dairy terms act bill today and for my hon. colleague from Provencher to second it.

Dairy terms are popular for labelling food items because of the reputation dairy products have among consumers for quality and nutrition. Consumers looking for a dairy product could unintentionally buy a non-dairy alternative due to the misuse of dairy terms in the label, and that has happened.

On the other hand, for example, consumers who are lactose intolerant and looking for a non-dairy alternative, may mistakenly overlook the necessary substitute product.

Producers can lose market share because of inaccurate or misleading labels.

Consumers are entitled to a properly informed choice in the matter of dairy products and non-dairy alternatives. Each year Canadian dairy producers spend over \$75 million on advertising dairy products and promoting the nutritional benefits of dairy products.

I believe this dairy term act would improve the existing federal regulatory structure by providing much needed clarity to the rules surrounding the use of dairy terms and food labels and by forbidding dairy terms to be used in a misleading manner.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

PETITIONS

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to present a substantial petition signed by thousands of first nations citizens in the province of Manitoba.

These signators reject the first nations governance initiative as proposed by the minister of Indian affairs and they point out that they suspect it to be nothing more than a thinly veiled effort to diminish or even do away with their treaty rights and inherent rights.

They point out further that the minister's so-called consultation process has been unsatisfactory. They urge all members of parliament to scrap the first nations governance agreement and replace it with something mutually acceptable that would actually address the many pressing and urgent issues facing first nations peoples and communities today.

FUEL PRICES

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas as well as elsewhere in British Columbia on the subject of high oil and gas prices.

The petitioners note that energy is a Canadian natural resource but that we have little control over this resource. They point out that the big oil companies, which dominate refining and gasoline sales, are free to set whatever prices they want at the wholesale level at the pumps and that they do not have to justify those prices at all. They raise concerns about Canadian households and businesses that rely on energy and therefore have no alternative but to pay the higher prices.

Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to urge the government to set up an energy price commission that would hold big oil companies accountable for the energy prices that they charge Canadians.

• (1520)

FISHERIES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I present to the House a petition from citizens of Canso and surrounding areas in Guysborough county, including Little Dover and Fox Harbour, who call upon the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to recognize that the denial of fish quota to their Canso plant could result in the closure of the only industry in that town.

They call upon the minister to revisit this decision and to come up with new areas of contribution to the economy so that people like Tanya Fougère, a student, and others in that town will be able to restore some economic vigour to the community. I am very pleased and honoured to table this petition in their names.

Privilege

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the notice delivered to you on Friday past, I rise on a question of privilege. I will begin with the contextual background.

On May 10 of last year, by news release, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of this House announced the launch of an 18 month study on the state of the Canadian broadcasting system. Prior to this, in a series of letters between the committee chair, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage, starting on March 16 of last year and ending on January 22 of this year, the department, under the signature of the deputy minister, agreed to pay for two expert advisers to assist the committee.

A memorandum of understanding between the Department of Canadian Heritage and the House of Commons was signed by the director general of broadcasting policy and innovation and the clerk assistant to the committees directorate settling the amount to be paid at about \$75,000 and the term of the agreement being from December 10, 2001 to March 31 of this year. In accordance with the memorandum, the expert advisers entered the standard form contracts of the House.

On February 11 of this year a news release was issued announcing the hiring of these two expert advisers.

On this point I want to be brief. By allowing the department to provide funding for committee advisers, I would suggest that a number of principles have been violated, however innocently, which affect my privilege as a member of the House through the committee operations of which I am a member.

First, there is the principle of comity between parliament and the executive or, in today's words, the relationship between the cabinet and ordinary members of parliament.

Comity, as I understand it, is the deference or courtesy that the House extends to the cabinet and vice versa so each may fulfil its constitutional role without interference or encroachment by each on the other. It is said the separate relationship between the House and the executive is a jealous one which must be studiously and scrupulously protected and guarded.

It is my suggestion that, once again, however innocently, the hiring of advisers using Department of Canadian Heritage funds violates the principle of comity and that jealous relationship between this House, as represented by the committee and the cabinet.

Privilege

As author and political scientist Donald Savoie noted recently, “Questions of accountability and how public servants relate to their ministers and to Parliament are fundamental issues of governance. When you pull one lever, a whole series of issues, some unforeseen, can surface”.

By providing money to hire these advisers the nature of a House committee has undergone unforeseen consequences in House operations.

Let me suggest a committee using departmental funds ought properly to be called a task force or a joint department/House of Commons study. In funding these advisers there is a clear erosion of the doctrine and practice of passive ministers and their respective departments in the operations and affairs of committees as part of the work of the House. In fact it is a clear encroachment in my opinion on the operations of the House by the department.

If a committee were to accept funding from an industry association or a lobby group to fund expert advice to a committee, the minimum consequence would be public derision and the rejection of any findings, conclusions or recommendations, it being obvious that such advice would not and could not be neutral and objective.

As a committee member I am entitled to advice from sources which are absolutely free from department ties. If the House is too poor or cares not to provide the funding from the inception of a study, let us say so. However this monetary contribution by the department violates my privileges to have advisers who are absolutely free from the executive in every respect, direct or indirect, to any ties to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and that department. I suggest that no written memoranda of operations or understanding can change that fundamental principle.

The second point I wish to make involves the written mandate for the expert advisers as part of the standard contract of this place and appended as schedule 1 to the contract.

• (1525)

The final paragraph states:

The Contractor shall not comment in public on the Committee's deliberations relating to the broadcasting study...However, the foregoing does not prohibit the experts from writing or speaking on broadcasting issues generally, such as would be the case in the normal conduct of their professional duties.

That agreement was signed on February 18 of this year. On April 11, less than a week ago, one of the two special advisers, professor David Taras, was quoted on page A3 of the *Calgary Herald*. In that article, which was titled “Who will be voted off the Hill next?”, he referred to certain members of the House, his analogy being to the television program *Survivor*. It is impossible to construe any of his comments as related to communications, as set out in his contract. It is clearly about party politics and certain specifically named members of the House. An expert adviser cannot offer opinion on the political fate of certain members of this Chamber.

As well, an Internet search turns up about 54 press quotes by the special adviser concerning members of the House and political events, such quotes being made approximately during the last 30 days .

No committee member can expect and receive neutral and objective policy advice from a committee adviser who holds and publicly states opinions on members of this Chamber and affairs directly related and emanating to and from this Chamber.

As a member of the House and a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage I submit that such remarks violate my privileges.

I believe the foregoing raises a prima facie case of privilege. To assist you, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for consent of the House to table the documents and materials which I have referred to and would be prepared to move a motion at the time of your decision should you find a prima facie question of privilege to have been made.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have consent of the House to table the documents referred to in his argument?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, I am the vice chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I wish to speak to this question of privilege and in support of it, particularly the second part.

Before I do, in fairness to both the committee and the committee chair, it must be noted that the committee chair approached the table of the House and received advice. It was upon this advice that the committee entered into the arrangement that my friend questions. I believe what has happened subsequent to receiving that advice is that events, particularly on the part of one of the advisers, David Taras, have overtaken and indeed we have unintended consequences.

My friend quoted from Donald Savoie who said “Questions of accountability and how public servants relate to their ministers and to parliament are fundamental issues of governance. When you pull one lever, a whole series of issues, some unforeseen, can surface.” Indeed that has happened.

I would like to quote very briefly from a letter I sent to David Taras today. It says:

As an important part of our consideration of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entering into a contract with you, we raised the issue of the many requests you receive for public commentary on political issues.

There was discussion about an understandable restriction of publicizing your opinion on matters relating to the issues under committee consideration. Additionally, we expressed concern about working with an advisor who made statements that were either intentionally or inadvertently hostile to the goals and objectives of the Canadian Alliance.

We cited the following examples. Would the Liberal committee members feel comfortable with your participation if, hypothetically, you publicly agreed with Warren Kinsella that the Liberal membership sign-up rules are racist? Or if you hypothetically agreed, in print or broadcast that the NDP was a spent force because they had no new ideas since 1960?

Well, here's an example that's not hypothetical.

This is from April 10. The headline by The Canadian Press was “Six Alliance Dissidents Seek Return to Fold”. This is a direct quote from that article. It says:

David Taras of the University of Calgary said the party [Alliance] still must tackle the image of having too few visible minorities, too few women and too few young people.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

“The amount of building they still have to do is extraordinary,” he said, adding it is still unclear whether Harper would “be dead on arrival in Ontario” in the next election.”

My letter to David Taras goes on to say:

Your first statement is a simple restatement of [the chair of the national caucus of the Liberals] slamming the Canadian Alliance Party with political spin. We knew we were going to be attacked by our opponents with untruthful statements when Mr. Harper won the leadership. We also knew there would be a pick-up of the Liberal spin by “experts” and “talking heads”.

I say to him that he is one. Later in my letter, I say:

If you were to do some research you might not continue to parrot the Liberal spin. The ‘image’ of which you speak is grossly inaccurate. That image is perpetuated and strengthened by independent [so-called] ‘experts’ who don’t do their homework...

The point of this correspondence is we would find your participation in our committee work more beneficial if you were to keep your musings about the electoral future of the Canadian Alliance Party out of the public domain.

We wouldn’t expect our committee clerks or researchers, who are in the employ of Parliament, to be quoted in the media. [The heritage minister] and elected partisans can keep their spin in the media without the help of consultants who moonlight as political experts.

My point which is in support of the second point of my colleague, my Liberal friend, is that indeed we rather foresaw these consequences but now we have the unintended consequences. If someone from the table here in the Chamber, or the clerk of the committee, or library of parliament officials or any of our experts who served the committee made comments like David Taras made, Mr. Speaker, I would hope you would fire them.

In this instance, because we have entered into this relationship with these so-called experts through the back door, indeed my privileges along with those of my friend and I dare say any other politician in this Chamber, have been breached.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I appreciate the information that has been provided to the House by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton and the hon. member for Kootenay-Columbia. The Chair will take this matter under advisement and get back to the House in due course.

I perhaps may ask the hon. member some questions later to clarify certain points that have been raised as I work my way through the arguments that have been presented, and I know they will be able to assist the Chair with answers to those questions should that need arise rather than proceed with that here on the floor of the House.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I really think it would be helpful for you to have all the truth and all the facts as you study this. I would like to appeal again to members on the other side to grant leave for the member to table the document that he wanted to table since it is valid information and should be considered.

The Speaker: As I indicated, the Chair can ask questions, and I fully intend to do that. I have a feeling that if I ask for certain relevant documents I might get them. I do not anticipate a particular problem and tabling them may be guiding the lily as it were. I am not particularly concerned about it. If I have any difficulty, that will become apparent in the ruling that the Chair gives to the House on this point.

• (1535)

[*English*]

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT ACT

Hon. David Collette (for the Minister of Canadian Heritage) moved that Bill C-54, an act to promote physical activity and sport, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Canada it is an honour for me to present to the House the result of the efforts, commitment and co-operation of the sport community throughout our country of various federal departments and agencies, of provincial-territorial governments and of private and public sector organizations that influence the world of sport in Canada.

The proposed bill, an act to promote physical activity and sport that would replace the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act, deals with sport that does much to unite our society.

[*Translation*]

Physical activity and sport are a tradition in Canada. All of us have, at one time, enjoyed playing hockey with the neighbours, challenging colleagues on a tennis court or cycling through some lesser known parts of the country.

In Canada, physical activity and sport are a family affair. Every parent remembers the first time a daughter skated or a son rode his bicycle. Sport is a passion which is transmitted from one generation to the next and which we can enjoy throughout our lives.

[*English*]

In Canada, we are passionate about physical activity and sport. From coast to coast to coast Canadians celebrated the success of our athletes at the winter Olympics and Paralympics in Salt Lake City. They celebrated again today as parliament officially honoured our medalists.

Our national memory is full of sports heroes whose achievements and victories have inspired our dreams. Maurice Richard, Mark Tewkesbury, Myriam Bédard, Elvis Stojko and Sylvie Fréchette are only some of our country’s idols who have made their mark in sport in Canada and have gone down in history. Within my riding of Simcoe North, we are especially proud of the accomplishments of Brian Orser.

[*Translation*]

In Canada, physical activity and sport also prepare for life. Each morning, thousands of young girls and boys get up with one purpose in mind: to give the best of themselves in the pool, on the soccer field or on the ski slopes.

Government Orders

In practicing their sports, they learn about discipline, team spirit and the quest for excellence. They learn about the importance of health and balance. Sport and physical activity prevent delinquency and crime, form thousands of volunteers from coast to coast to coast, and bring together Canadians from all walks of life by eliminating barriers and differences.

[English]

Far more than a past time, sport and physical activity are tools for living a full life in Canada. Close to 10 million Canadians regularly take part in sport activities. However is that enough? We believe we can do more. We believe we can do much better.

The existing Fitness and Amateur Sport Act dates from 1961. It has become necessary to rethink the role of Canada's sports system in line with the new issues and circumstances. Like many other countries, Canada must amend its legislation to adapt to a new reality and to effectively reflect and strengthen the important role that the Government of Canada plays in fostering, promoting and developing physical activity and sport in Canada.

Starting with the title, very few countries refer to amateur sport in their modernized legislation. This concept is increasingly ambiguous since professional athletes compete in the Olympics and amateur athletes collect fees at some competitions.

Times have changed. Our habits have changed as well and not necessarily for the better. According to a study recently published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, obesity among boys increased by 92% between 1981 and 1996. Among girls it increased by 57%.

• (1540)

[Translation]

The Canadian health system estimates that 25% of Canadian children are overweight. It is estimated that young children between 2 and 11 years of age spend on average 19 hours a week in front of the TV set. From 1992 to 1998, the sports participation rate of young people aged 15 and over has decreased, falling from 45% to 34%.

Socio-economic or cultural barriers still prevent some groups in our society from fully developing by participating in sports. I refer to aboriginals, handicapped people, women and visible minorities.

[English]

As we can see, physical inactivity is dangerously gaining ground. For public health the impact is disastrous, incurring \$2.1 billion per year on direct health care costs. Still worse, physical inactivity is estimated to be a contributing factor to the death of more than 21,000 Canadians every year. We must act now before it is too late. We must act now for tomorrow.

[Translation]

The sports community had expectations and we had to meet them. Two years ago, my predecessor, now the citizenship and immigration minister, launched an extensive consultation process in order to improve the sports experience of all Canadians in partnership with the whole sports community.

Sports associations, athletes, coaches, volunteers and administrators, federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as

municipalities, all have taken part in discussions across the country. The consultations led to a national summit held a year ago and finally to a new Canadian sports policy.

[English]

The new Canadian sport policy gives expression to the vision shared by all sports stakeholders who participated in the consultations. It defines what we want to accomplish over the next 10 years in the world of sport with clear objectives.

At the same time last year, the Government of Canada recognized the needs of the sport community by providing an additional \$10 million over three years to the Sport Canada budget.

Today, proud of all the work we have accomplished thus far, the Government of Canada is proposing another component in our strategy to promote sport activity in our country.

[Translation]

Following the Canadian sports policy that inspired us, on last April 10, I introduced the physical activity and sport legislation. This bill, which replaces the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act, enshrines our new sports policy. It provides us with new legislation focused on the participation of every Canadian in sports.

[English]

With the new bill we are acting on the initiatives and consultations of the past several years. With the new bill we are moving from words to deeds. The bill officially recognizes that sport is an investment for our society.

• (1545)

[Translation]

To invest in sport is to invest in the health and welfare of Canadians. To invest in sport is to invest in the development of our communities.

This is why a preamble was added to the bill showing that the commitment of the Government of Canada to physical activity and sport was to be seen as an investment in the betterment of all Canadians and not as an expenditure. Any investment in physical activity and sport contributes to the quality of life and translates into long term health care savings.

Let us not forget that in our country over 378,000 jobs are directly linked to sport. Thousands of men and women work in ski centres, arenas, fitness centres, golf clubs and many more sport establishments. They are our neighbours, our friends, community leaders. Altogether, the sports industry contributes over \$8.9 billion to our country's gross domestic product.

[English]

The bill seeks to increase participation in sport by all Canadians whatever their sex, physical or mental capabilities, their age or the colour of their skin. Regularly, week after week throughout the year, we want all our fellow citizens to engage in physical activity.

Government Orders

In pursuit of this objective, governments, associations and sport organizations must talk together. They must better co-ordinate their efforts so that all Canadians have the easiest possible access to the sport facilities in all our communities. This is one of the priorities of the bill. By making our sport infrastructure and resources accessible, we enable our people to practice sport.

The bill also reaffirms another priority of the Government of Canada to continue to support the pursuit of excellence in sport. Our athletes have the talent and capacity to succeed nationally and internationally. The result of the most recent Olympic and Paralympic Games are ample proof of this, but we can better guide their development. We can better co-ordinate our resources. We can improve our programs. We can strengthen the training provided to coaches. We want to encourage others to become partners in our efforts: various levels of governments, sport organizations and especially the private sector.

The bill gives us the means to encourage our business people to help fund development in sport because we must open up to new forms of co-operation. We must devise new ways of working together if we want to achieve our objectives.

[*Translation*]

More than ever before in Canada sport is everybody's business. We recognize that the task is daunting, but this bill will allow us to meet the challenge. Its modern and up-to-date measures put us at long last on an equal footing with other industrialized countries. Finally, this bill establishes a new organization responding to the sport community's requests.

[*English*]

Over the past decade, Canada's sport system has frequently faced litigation and court cases. Unfortunately the arbitration procedures already in place were limited. A fair effective solution was needed. The bill therefore calls for the creation of the sport dispute resolution centre of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The centre is an independent organization that will deal in a non-partisan way with any contentious issue related to sport. It will provide fairer access to dispute resolution and might be used as an alternative to litigation.

For the first time ever, the sport community will be able to rely on a national arbitration and mediation service. This centre is a tangible measure, a response tailored to meet the needs of the sport community and the challenges the sporting world is facing today.

● (1550)

[*English*]

This innovative bill is the vision of all who help make Canada a great country for sport. It opens up the future and brings hope. For our children there is the hope of growing up while exploring various sports, the hope of having fun while learning. For young athletes there is the hope of being able to develop their potential to the fullest, of being more successful in their studies, the hope of achieving their dreams.

[*Translation*]

For our volunteers, there is the hope of broadening their life experience, of learning and growing while contributing their time. For our coaches, there is the hope of getting better, of having a stimulating career and of seeing our athletes succeed.

[*English*]

For all Canadians there is the hope of living an active, healthy life, the hope of enhancing our quality of life and our society's well-being.

This bill is the commitment of the Government of Canada to the future of sport in our country.

[*Translation*]

It provides a renewed legal framework in keeping with the new reality. It updates our goals and priorities. It reaffirms our values and principles. It reflects the cultural richness and diversity of our country.

I am very proud to submit this bill to the approval of the House for a healthy and sport-loving Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as the secretary of state noted, the bill will replace the 1961 Fitness and Amateur Sport Act with the physical activity and sport act. The purpose of the bill is to encourage, promote and develop sport and physical activity. The bill will also serve to strengthen the role the Government of Canada plays with regard to the promotion of physical activity and sport. The bill reinforces the importance of fitness and sport for the well-being of Canadians.

What impressed me is that I am told that 1,000 people from amateur and pro sports were involved in the creation of the bill. These included athletes, coaches and the provincial governments. From the information I received, it would seem that a very thorough job went into the drafting of the bill. Efforts to attain these goals will be made through the co-operation of federal and provincial governments, and private and public sector sport organizations.

In any bill of this type, we always look at what could possibly be unintended consequences. I have some difficulty in coming up with any unintended consequences on the horizon from this bill.

One of the objectives of this legislation is to increase the opportunity for involvement in sport from the amateur to the elite athlete. Hosting of major sporting events and promotion of the importance of physical activity are some of the avenues by which to attain more awareness of the importance of physical activity. Commitment to the importance of sport and physical activity for all Canadians, as the secretary of state has mentioned, has wide-ranging benefits such as a reduction in health care costs, as well as social, economic and cultural benefits.

Government Orders

We see many situations in community organizations and recreational complexes where young people in particular, who otherwise would be engaged in activities which would be at best questionable, are engaged in good, strong physical activity when given the opportunity. I think particularly of the young men in our society who have energy to burn. I was one of them and I needed a constructive place to put it. This is the thrust of the bill and I see it as being very beneficial.

The other thing that impressed me with the bill is that the private sector will be encouraged to contribute to sports financially. We have looked at the advertising for the Olympics. Many corporate sponsors have become involved in the Olympics. Some of the shoulder sports, those sports that are not the focus of attention, certainly do not have the same kind of support as do figure skating or ice hockey. Nonetheless, the fact that the bill goes out of its way to encourage private sector contributions to sports financially is very positive. Groups that are not commonly represented in the sports field will be encouraged.

Drug free sports, ethics in sports and dispute resolutions are the prime objectives in the legislation.

The legislation will establish a non-profit sport dispute resolution centre in Canada. Coming from the Canadian Alliance side, I immediately asked how much it would cost and what the dollars and cents would be. In the department briefing I was told that the budget would be in the range of \$1 million a year. From that there will be 10 full time equivalents.

In addition to acting as a collector and distributor of information, what appeals to me in a very big way is the dispute settlement aspect. If we are looking at an additional or new cost of \$1 million, how can we justify that? There have been a total of about 40 disputes annually which have been very costly for the government. For example, the anticipated legal costs for Synchro Canada and Synchro Quebec are \$50,000 for that one dispute alone. It does not take a lot of \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 legal bills to equal \$1 million.

• (1555)

The beauty of the dispute resolution centre as far as I am concerned is that we cannot call up the Olympics or the Commonwealth games and say to hold it a minute, we have a dispute here about the athletes we were thinking of sending and we cannot decide who is to go, so how about cancelling the Olympics for a couple of months until we can get this settled? It is not only a case of dollars and cents. There is a very practical issue. When there is a dispute between athletes as to who should be going, when there is a dispute between organizations as to who should be representing them, when there is a dispute perhaps between athletic organizations and coaching organizations, which right now end up at a rate of 40 annually, there is no relatively simple way to be able to clear them.

What I am taking a look at is that speedy dispute resolution and the fact that the bill specifically sets out this dispute organization, so I am looking forward to the dispute centre being able to resolve these issues and then the number of issues that would end up before the courts would really be quite minuscule.

Clause 16 of the bill states:

The directors, other than the executive director, are not entitled to be paid any remuneration, but are entitled to be paid such reasonable travel and other expenses incurred by them in connection with their duties or functions under this Act as may be fixed by the by-laws of the Centre.

Again, I am taking a look at the fact that on the surface, and I am trusting the government on this one, it appears as though we have a cost effective way of using the dollars that are currently being spent to settle disputes. It seems like a way of using those same dollars, perhaps fewer dollars, to set up this sports centre, and furthermore, the directors, other than the executive director, will not be entitled to be paid. We are talking about volunteers.

As well, paragraph 17(1)(i) states as an objective:

the establishment of mediation and arbitration procedures for resolving sport disputes, including a mechanism for determining the manner in which the parties may select an arbitrator or mediator and the language, according to the needs of the parties, in which the parties may be heard and the decision rendered;—

It seems to me that the bill is quite thorough and looks at all the details.

Clause 18, about the chairperson, states:

The Minister, after consulting with the directors, other than the executive director, shall designate one of them as chairperson to hold office during good behaviour for any term of not more than three years. The chairperson may be designated for not more than two consecutive terms and may be removed by the Minister for cause.

Subclause 21(2) states:

The executive director holds office during good behaviour for a term of not more than five years, which term may be renewed for one or more further terms, but may be removed by the Minister for cause.

As I am going through the bill, it seems to me that unless there is something that does not jump off the page I actually have to give the Liberals a compliment. That is a terrible thing for a member of the opposition to do. I am getting frowns from all my colleagues.

An hon. member: Security, remove this man.

Mr. Jim Abbott: Yes, "security, remove this man", my Alliance colleague says.

The fact of the matter is that I have always said when the government finally gets around to doing something that is positive and that is good, I will say it is positive and it is good. I am in support of Bill C-54. I will be recommending to my colleagues that we pass this at second reading to go to committee for further consideration.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today in the House in connection with Bill C-54, an act to promote physical activity and sport.

Initially, this bill appears to be laudable and its objectives desirable. We are in favour of the bill in principle, provided there is no encroachment on the jurisdictional areas of Quebec and the provinces, and provided there is explicit compliance with the Official Languages Act in the preamble of the bill in question.

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The Bloc Québécois shares the view expressed in Bill C-54, that physical activity is important and must be encouraged. It has countless benefits, both medical and social. Everyone is familiar with the saying about a healthy mind in a healthy body. This is a goal that it is legitimate to aim at, and in particular to maintain. That is why we must have the means at our disposal to achieve that goal.

In the preamble to the bill, it is stated that the Government of Canada recognizes that physical activity and sport are integral parts of Canadian culture and society and produce obvious benefits to health and socialization. Those benefits go further than that. There are some very important economic and structural benefits as well.

It is true that these impacts are hard to analyze because some of them are indirect and evaluating them is a complex process. A number of naysayers will be quick to say that physical activity and sport are not cost-effective. Based on what exactly? How can they justify this conclusion solely on the basis of how profitable a stadium for a professional team is? This is so illogical as to be ridiculous. Sport cannot be summed up in terms of profits and dividends.

In fact, we believe the total opposite. The beneficial effects of physical activity and sport are palpable as we all know. It is simple: a person who engages in physical activity or sport will, without a doubt, have an opportunity to significantly decrease his or her health problems. A healthy person takes less sick leave, is more productive, and so on. This ideal scenario will, obviously, not happen all by itself, however. It is therefore very important to set some guideposts for intervention, in order to attain this simplified outcome. This is what seems to come out of an examination of Bill C-54.

There are dual target groups. First of course there is the elite athletes and then there are all the rest of us ordinary folk.

When we look at the general public in terms of participation in physical activity, we still have a lot of work to do. It seems that we will have to review the meaning of participation. Individual interests are so varied that it will be difficult to involve all Canadians and Quebecers in this project to promote physical activity.

There are health problems that are the direct result of decreasing physical activity in North America. We are less and less active. Moreover, we have all noticed that obesity among children is on the rise. It is cause for concern, and we must do something about this situation before it is too late.

I am wondering why that is. The ParticipAction program was known to all Canadians, but this government decided to put an end to it last year.

Now that we know what the objectives are, let us hope that money will be transferred to the Government of Quebec to support Kino-Québec, a program that is still active in that province and the objectives of which are similar to the ones pursued in Bill C-54.

We must also look for the causes of this decrease in physical activity. One would think that television, video games and computer games are the main culprits, but we must look further. It would be too easy to stop there.

Is it because of insufficient access to equipment? Is it because of a lack of equipment? Is it because of a lack of coaches? Let us not

forget the lack of information and insufficient media coverage of many disciplines.

• (1605)

It is important then to look at the appropriateness of eliminating the Participation program. We need this type of program; the fact that Kino-Québec still exists is proof.

I believe that the goals of the bill are commendable, on the condition that practical measures be taken to promote physical activity. I remain somewhat skeptical about this, given that the broadcast for the Paralympic Games was clearly deficient.

In fact, coverage of the Paralympic and Commonwealth Games was minimal, almost non-existent. A whole lot needs to be done to convince sedentary people to do physical activity. It is hard to attract people to physical activity that they have never seen. Because of this, I feel that there must be greater, broad and varied promotion of physical activity.

Take our elite athletes, we have watched them produce extraordinary, breathtaking performances on many occasions. Yet we must not forget that they are only the tip of the iceberg.

We need to stop and think a moment, and try to imagine the number of athletes who trained for years without making it to international competitions.

For each athlete who makes it to the podium, how many are standing in the wings? It is clear that we also have incredible potential.

The recent results at the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City have helped us seize the potential of our athletes and coaches, despite the obvious lack of resources for many years. Our athletes' determination is exemplary, as is that of our coaches. We can only imagine what the results would have been if we had the required resources.

The contribution made by Quebec athletes to the Salt Lake City Games was remarkable, even exceptional, frankly. These young athletes demonstrate tremendous talent, but it must not deteriorate because of our lack of support, which they need.

The work required to prepare an olympic athlete is demanding and requires several years of training and concentration. It requires more than wishful thinking. It requires money, lots of money.

Every one of us, at some time or another, has wished to be an olympic athlete. This is a childhood dream that we have all had. Unless this dream has come true, we all hope today that our children will become olympians or paralympians.

But why have we not achieved our goal? Is it because of a lack of money? Is it because of old equipment? Is it because training centres are too far from home?

We all know the values acquired through the practice of sports, win or lose: persistence, discipline, effort, determination and sacrifice.

Government Orders

We all know as well the type of behaviour that is needed to pursue excellence. But we should not forget that excellence is not only getting a medal. Excellence is part in everyday life. That is where another target group comes in, the ordinary citizens.

We were all dreaming of olympic medals when we started in sports. Most of us have turned to other goals in life. But some had the opportunity to pursue their dream of winning and earning medals. And very few of them reached the podium.

Those who did have inspired us. Their performance has been a catalyst for sportsmanship. We thank them for that, and, because of that, we realize now that we should provide the tools needed to reach this goal to the greater number.

Ultimately, there is no difference between sports at the grassroots and excellence in sports. Elite athletes and the general public are closely related. All elite athletes began practising their sport in their backyard and neighborhood. That is why we should keep investing to support athletes, coaches, and officials.

•(1610)

This is why we must continue to improve existing infrastructures and invest in new ones. In short, we must do our utmost to promote the pleasure of competing in the respect of sport values.

Bill C-54 lists a number of objectives. These objectives are a wish list that will hopefully become reality.

The Bloc Quebecois hopes that these objectives will soon become practical measures that will allow our athletes to achieve their goals of excellence, and also measures that will promote public interest for sports and physical activity.

We believe that the government's intention is to promote physical and sports so as to improve the well-being and health of the public. We hope that this initiative will not come too late and that it will not infringe on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

It is clear that there is a generation of athletes and coaches who were sacrificed because of the cuts made to the programs designed to support them.

We all know that an athlete, a coach or an official requires years of training and that such training must be continuous and be financially and structurally supported.

I can imagine the situation in which many athletes and coaches found themselves because of funding cuts. They had to make the hardest decision of their lives: either pursue their olympic dream and get into debt, or give up everything to earn a living and survive.

It was high time that this situation was corrected. The time for studies and committees is over. It is time to make the necessary funds available to athletes, coaches and officials, and also to the public, which is interested in improving its quality of life. Who knows, perhaps this will help a child fulfill his or her dream.

We are pleased to see that the government wants to encourage the Quebec, provincial and territorial governments to promote and develop sports. Let us hope that this will be achieved by making the necessary transfers of money to fulfill this objective and without infringing on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

Under clause 7 of the bill, the minister may enter into contribution agreements with the Quebec and provincial governments. The Bloc Quebecois hopes that the government will set aside any intention to promote Canadian identity under this clause. I should point out that no reference is made to the notion of Canadian identity in this bill. We hope that it will be the same when the time comes to implement this legislation.

For a long time now, the Bloc Quebecois has been asking that athletes, coaches and officials be the main focus of any new policy on sports. Given the wording of this new bill, this seems to be the case. Consequently, we encourage the government to respect this non-political commitment.

Another mission that the heritage minister is assuming is to encourage the private sector to contribute to the development of sports. The Bloc Quebecois hopes that this contribution will also extend to physical activity. I believe there is room for development in this regard. Employers will surely understand their responsibility in promoting the benefits of physical activity.

As far as the private sector's contribution to the development of sports is concerned, we hope that it will be made with the best interests of athletes and coaches in mind, and not for the sole benefit of the private sector.

Much of this bill concerns the establishment of a sports dispute resolution centre. We believe that the establishment of such a centre is important. We believe that it will benefit Canadian sports federations as well as athletes and coaches who are members of these federations.

There have been examples, some of them very recent, where an athlete was severely penalized because the decision concerning a dispute was not made in time for him or her to take part in a competition.

•(1615)

Since the avenues for dispute resolution have so far been limited to common law courts, the delays, which dragged out the proceedings unduly, wore athletes down. We feel that the creation of this centre could greatly reduce delays.

We have also seen cases where a Canadian federation or an athlete has had to spend huge amounts of money because a dispute was being heard in a common law court, with all the attendant costs.

It is therefore to be hoped that the creation of this centre will provide a means of dispute resolution satisfactory to all the parties, the Canadian federations.

We are pleased to note that this not-for-profit centre will operate independently, without any form of interference from the government. We are also pleased to note that the purpose of this centre will be to encourage transparency in procedures and decision making. I would remind those listening that this is something the Bloc Quebecois has called for repeatedly in the House.

Government Orders

We cannot stress enough the need for a decision making process that is independent as well as impartial. As it is for a common law court, judicial independence is paramount. Parties must feel that the courts are free to think and act as they see fit.

The provisions of Bill C-54 appear to confirm this requirement for transparency and independence.

It remains to be seen whether the decisions of the centre's arbitrators or mediators will be final and not subject to appeal. The bylaws will set out the centre's *modus operandi*.

The Bloc Québécois feels that, in the interests of fairness to everyone, appeals should be allowed. Right now, the decisions of arbitration boards can be appealed. Why should the approach be different for the centre?

The Bloc Québécois thinks that the centre should deliver speedy decisions with the right of appeal. We think that this is the way to protect everyone's rights.

Since the parties will have first appeared before an arbitrator or mediator, they will have been in a position to assess the outcome of an appeal. We think that the fact that arbitrators and mediators will come from the sports community augurs well.

We wish to emphasize, however, that the centre's clientele will be limited to the Canadian federations and their members. The jurisdictions of Quebec and of the provinces will therefore not be affected in disputes involving Quebec federations.

We feel that the centre's *modus operandi* should be based on Quebec's Code of Civil Procedure provisions concerning arbitration by lawyers.

Pursuant to section 382 of Quebec's Code of Civil Procedure, a case is referred to arbitration only when the parties ask for a dispute to be resolved. We believe it would be appropriate to do the same for the center being created through Bill C-54.

We insist that the requirements set out in section 386 of the Code of Civil Procedure, which states that the arbitrators must make their award in writing, be applied.

The 30 day period provided in section 387 of the Code of Civil Procedure should be included in the administrative regulations of the centre, as should the homologation of the award or decision.

As I said previously, it is essential that all decisions be subject to appeal before a regular court of law. This is specified in section 393 of the Code of Civil Procedure, which states "The award, when homologated, may be appealed like any judgment of the Superior Court".

We cannot understand why the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre should be subject to rules different from those now in force in Quebec, in the area of arbitration.

In fact, the Bloc Québécois insists that the goals and missions provided for in this bill be achieved in a context of total respect for the jurisdictions of Quebec, the other provinces and the territories. We are adamant about that and will continue to be. It is a fundamental requirement which is self-evident.

● (1620)

We would remind hon. members that the federal government has always recognized Quebec's responsibility as far as recreation and health are concerned. It did so back in 1987 with the National Recreation Statement.

Some of the provisions of Bill C-54 could be implemented in a way that would be satisfactory to all. One example of this: Clause 5 (j), which refers to bursaries and fellowships. As we are all aware, this is an area of wholly Quebec and provincial jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois therefore recommends the transfer of the funds earmarked for this to the Government of Quebec so that it may apply them via programs already in place. As a result, the duplication and redundancy that generally results from such overlap would be avoided.

In fact, we recommend that all the *whereas* statements in the preamble reflect this respect of jurisdictions, with a view to avoiding needless and pointless friction between the various levels of government.

It is also essential and vital for this bill to state explicitly that the Official Languages Act must be formally applied, and applied to all of its provisions. This must be stated in the preamble to the bill.

The act must therefore be implemented as part of the regular activities of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada created by Bill C-54.

We believe that this is an opportunity to set things straight. Certain issues of course affect all of Canada, but there are others that are closely tied to the French fact. Moreover, the Commissioner of Official Languages has reported on this.

We hope that these recommendations will be followed and implemented in the very near future, and that this bill will be the vehicle for doing so. It is very logical for these recommendations to be implemented as soon as possible. Numerous French speaking athletes have been penalized by the lack of respect for the French fact. Another generation must not suffer the same fate.

In fact, the exodus of French speaking athletes is a result of the lack of resources earmarked for sports facilities. Lacking what they need, our athletes have often been forced into exile in the west to perfect their craft. This exodus has a devastating effect on Quebec.

As far as the elite athletes are concerned, some measures have been put into place, but there are still too many shortcomings. This is why young athletes and coaches who have risen to a high level end up going west when their striving for excellence goes beyond what is available to them in Quebec.

During the regional conferences, it was mentioned that we need a plan to correct the situation and train high level athletes and coaches in Quebec, and train them in French, to meet the needs of the French speaking community. Another way to correct this unfair situation is to help with major events so that we have international exposure for the potential that exists in Quebec.

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We have all seen that there is a great potential in Quebec, but our help is needed. As a matter of fact, all athletes and coaches now need our help.

Some people are talking about a lost generation, and others of future generations that will not have the time to develop their full potential. Clearly, the training of Olympic and Paralympic athletes takes years. About ten years, actually. Is it too late? It is never too late. If we are to succeed, the Canadian heritage minister and the secretary of state for amateur sport must not hold the athletes back, but give them a free hand so that they can get to the finish line first. We have been holding them back too long. It is about time we did something to help them.

The Canadian heritage minister and the secretary of state for amateur sport should respect the jurisdictions of all levels of government. Instead of consulting, the minister should have discussions on an implementation plan with her counterparts in Quebec and the other provinces and territories, because they are the ones who know best the needs and aspirations of their athletes and coaches.

• (1625)

Through discussions, an agreement could be reached on a shared strategy to be followed and on the specific challenges to each of them, all this while respecting their jurisdictions.

The preamble states that the federal government wishes to encourage cooperation with the Government of Quebec, among the various governments, the physical activity and sport communities and the private sector. It specifies that this encouragement is for the purpose of coordinating their promotion efforts.

Again, we would like to point out that there needs to be more than co-operation; there must be ongoing and sustained discussions in order to succeed. In fact, we believe that the first efforts at coordination must be done between the Government of Quebec and the different levels of government before involving the private sector.

As regards the private sector, the government must ensure that all disciplines of sport be respected. In other words, the private sector must support all events in all disciplines, instead of investing in the careers of a few athletes that have obtained good results. In doing so, our athletes and coaches will get what they deserve in the end, real support, both financial and social.

We understand that this will only produce real results if we conduct a serious and determined review of our philosophy toward our athletes and coaches. We also need to review our attitude toward physical activity.

Another part of the preamble refers to increasing awareness among Canadians of the significant benefits of physical activity and the practice of sport; this must also respect Quebec's jurisdiction and that of the other levels of government. These means involving various departments. I am referring, among others, to the those of health and education.

We wish to reiterate the need for ongoing discussions with counterparts from Quebec, the provinces and territories. As we

mentioned earlier, the only way we will be able to raise awareness is if we overcome the current media coverage shortcomings.

This means that there will have to be more diversity in the media coverage. I believe that it is appropriate for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport to intervene in this regard.

Bill C-54 then states the objectives and the related measures to achieve the objectives set out in the preamble. First, it mentions research and studies on physical activity and sport. Our first comment is as follows: we all need to do more.

I hope it is not the intention of the minister and the secretary of state to prolong the process under this bill by ordering studies. The needs are well known. What is required is action.

The bill refers to national and regional conferences. We believe that it is the meetings between the Quebec, provincial and territorial counterparts that will prove most productive.

Clause 5(c) provides for the recognition of achievement in respect of physical activity and sport by the granting of certificates or other awards of merit. Respecting the French language could be included as a criterion.

Clause 5(g) provides for the support of projects and programs related to physical activity or sport. We believe that, indeed, there must be significant support, provided such support takes the form of transfers of money to the Quebec, provincial and territorial governments that already have programs for such purposes.

Clause 5(i) makes reference to training. It must be pointed out that training comes under Quebec's jurisdiction. In order to avoid any interference, the federal government will have to give the related moneys to Quebec and the provinces. The same goes for clause 5(j).

• (1630)

Based on the wording of clause 5(n), it is obvious to us that it is through the transfer of funds to Quebec, the provinces and the territories that this objective will be successfully achieved.

We hope that the government will not try to do indirectly what it cannot do directly by using clause 6.

We think it is essential that this government respect the rights and interests of all athletes and coaches by defining specific criteria for financial assistance.

In short, I encourage the government to reach these objectives, but it must do so in the respect of everyone's rights. In order to do so, it will have to establish a permanent dialogue with Quebec, the provinces and the territories.

More importantly, we will have to change our attitude toward physical activity and see it as something beneficial, instead of a chore. This means that the government will have to ensure that all Canadians and Quebecers have access to sports facilities.

It goes without saying that there are issues much more important than sports in the world. However, we may be able to reduce animosity between individuals by making it easier for them to have access to activities that promote exchanges and co-operation.

Government Orders

As I said earlier, the values inherent in sport and physical activity are noble ones. The finest example is that of the Olympic Games, which bring together people from around the world with the goal of universal participation. This should be our goal.

Attaining it will require media coverage of all activities and sports, including, of course, the Paralympics.

The notion of profits must be set aside and equipment and coaches made available. Volunteer participation in these areas must be encouraged and recognized. Naturally, programs and projects must be decentralized. A community base for activities and sports must be built.

We must go back to fundamentals. We must encourage our children to play outside, to play in the backyard and in the neighbourhood. We must provide real support for our athletes, coaches and officials. The entire elite must be encouraged.

They must be given the financial and structural tools to attain their goal, whether or not it includes a medal.

We must applaud the efforts of our youth at school, in the gym, at the arena. We must applaud the efforts of the not so young who encourage our children. They too must be recognized, and not forgotten as they too often are.

In short, athletes, coaches, officials, our future athletes and our future coaches, must once again be a key consideration in these objectives and this policy on sport.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois supports the principles of this bill, provided, of course, that certain amendments are made regarding respect for the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces in the fields of recreation, training, education and health, and that there is specific reference in the preamble to Bill C-54 to systematic enforcement of the Official Languages Act.

Athletes, coaches, officials, the young and the not so young have repeatedly shown us that they have courage and pride. It is now up to us to show them that our hearts are in the right place.

• (1635)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Members' speeches will now be 20 minutes in length, followed by 10 minutes of questions or comments.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly congratulate the minister responsible for amateur sport for his recent appointment to cabinet.

The purposes of Bill C-54 are to encourage, promote and develop sport and physical activities and to reflect and strengthen the role of government in sport. We saw here today on the floor of the House that sport and physical activity are very important to Canadians and I think there is a recognition that the government should promote physical activity and participation in sporting activities. As the member for the Bloc noted, all of this requires the co-operation of provincial and territorial governments, physical education and activity groups, the sports community and the private sector. The government's role in all of this is the promotion of physical activity

as a basic element of health and well-being of Canadians and also the reduction of barriers that prevent them from being active.

There certainly are barriers to physical activity. Canadians face real and perceived barriers in moving from a sedentary to an active lifestyle. Central among them is the lack of social, physical and cultural environments that support people's intentions to become active. Other barriers include lack of time, energy, information and access to facilities and costs and concern for safety. These systemic barriers need to be addressed if public health objectives related to physical activity are to be achieved.

The bill sets out various goals such as increased participation, the support of excellence and the building of capacity in the Canadian sports system. The government is looking for drug free sports, fair play and the fair and timely resolution of disputes, the alternative dispute resolution system on which I will say more in a moment.

The government has correctly targeted women, the disabled, aboriginals and other minorities as groups requiring upgrading of physical activity, all the while boosting the high performance sports and the athletes that go with them. Physical education programs will be re-emphasized according to the terms of the bill and that is welcome. Recently the press has reported that there is something like a 400% reduction in physical activity in the current younger generation compared to those who were young back in the 1960s. A fitter, more active population would obviously save billions of dollars in our health care system.

Today the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough was on his feet talking about sport and physical activity. The current Minister of Health applauded and congratulated him, especially on his remarks about physical activity, but the ministry that she is now responsible for has over the last couple of years entirely cut out the very well applauded participation program that was around for almost 30 years starting in 1971. It died, not because Canadians were not interested but because financial resources from the government continued to drop until the program was not sustainable any longer.

Back to public health and on women and aboriginal groups, these two groups are overrepresented in many of our health care areas and underrepresented when it comes to physical activity and sports.

In January immediately after the minister was appointed Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, his department received a letter from a gentleman in Regina who was endeavouring to develop a weekend tournament in March of next year for outdoor hockey league participants. Probably 45% of these participants, 950 individuals all told, would be first nations or Metis children.

• (1640)

The outdoor hockey league, the OHL as it is known in Regina, is particularly for young boys who do not have the wherewithal to join the tiered hockey system. They have a competitive outdoor hockey league which relies on used equipment. It has received support from the NHL Players Association and others. It is a highly worthwhile endeavour.

Government Orders

Mr. Ken Jones, who is intimately involved with the outdoor hockey league in Regina, is trying to promote a weekend tournament in March called the world cup dream weekend. He is looking for financial assistance from the government. Unfortunately, there has been no response. My office checked with Mr. Jones earlier today and there has not even been an acknowledgment. We hope that there will be an acknowledgment forthcoming so that plans can proceed for this important tournament next year.

The physical activity and sport bill would encourage sport as a tool to develop Canada in co-operation with other countries. Private sector money is part of the bill, facilitating the participation of under-represented groups. It would encourage provinces and the territories to co-ordinate, stage and host Canadian games or international games in this country. It would also support additional activities and alternate dispute resolutions for sport.

The dispute resolutions centre is deemed to be a not for profit independent corporation, a national dispute resolution service with expertise and assistance in this area. The goal is timely, fair and transparent resolutions of sport.

One of the things I am concerned about in the bill is the two track policy, one is sport and the other is physical activity. It will be easy for people who are monitoring and implementing it to be overwhelmed by the sport aspect of it at the expense of physical activity.

Jim Thompson, recently appointed chief executive officer of the Canadian Olympic Association, has said that we definitely need to focus on high-performance excellence. The Secretary of State for Amateur Sport agreed with Mr. Thompson's analysis. I emphasize, and we saw it here today, that we do need success stories. Our children need success stories that come from athletes who perform very well at the international level.

With the glamour, the idolization of athletes, and the fawning that sometimes occurs around successful athletes we must ensure that we do not go all out on one side and forget about the fact that it needs to be the greatest good for the greatest number. We need to be out there promoting physical education and physical activity that occurs for all of our young people, encouraging lifelong habits and, as a result, put less wear and tear on our health care system.

I am pleased to see in today's newspaper some reference to the greatest good for the greatest number. There was a fairly large survey that has just been released that indicates 65% of Canadians would like more government money spent on arenas, playgrounds and swimming pools, as well as sports for women, the poor, the disabled and aboriginals. As long as we can keep our eye on the goal of physical activity, the government will be responding to what Canadians are saying as a result of being polled.

● (1645)

The result of the extensive consultation that has been alluded to in this debate earlier is that the 1961 act is no longer reflective of today's modern sports and Canadian sport policy. The government's role requires a more strategic and collaborative approach. One of the minor things that would occur with the bill is the deletion of amateur sport because it is increasingly ambiguous and many other countries have dropped it.

I note in passing that this was presented by the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport. I am assuming that we will see a bill to make that individual the minister of state for sport. We will stay tuned on that one. Bill C-54 would allow the government to work collaboratively with partners, including professional sports.

I would like to provide a few more specifics on the alternative dispute resolution which proposes a secretariat. There is no organization in Canada now to advise national sports organizations when they have a dispute. This would offer procedures and independent mediation and arbitration services as an alternative to the time consuming notion of going to courts, which is what has been in place heretofore. That is an appropriate change in the bill.

I will be supportive of Bill C-54 and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus will as well. It is worthy of support overall but I urge that we keep an eye on the physical activity component because there will be that inevitable attraction to the high performance side of sport where we shower attention and money on our star athletes.

We need to be concerned about the growing obesity that we see, especially in the younger generation, the potato chip crowd, that likes to sit back and watch all of this. The minister said that Canadians have a passion for physical activity and sport. They have a passion for sport. I am less sure that they have a passion for physical activity. We really need to encourage that in the bill.

The bill talks about barriers. Surely one of the barriers is the fact that too many Canadians are working too long. They are exhausted at the end of a workday or work week and too tired to either work out themselves or to encourage their children to get away from the television set, go outside or otherwise take part.

In the province of Ontario where the House of Commons is situated we have a 60 hour work week. Some of us thought many years ago at university that we would have reduced work weeks. What we find is that people tend to be working longer hours, which means that there is less time to indulge. We could take lessons from Europe, especially Scandinavian and Nordic countries, in terms of learning how some other societies deal with those kinds of problems.

These kinds of barriers must be addressed. Let us be careful that the physical activity side is not overwhelmed by the sport side. I expect the NDP caucus will support the bill and I intend to.

● (1650)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Palliser is a former sports journalist and has been following sports for many years when he was a newspaper writer following national hockey and so on. Along the same vein as the points he was making, I wonder if he would comment on an issue from my riding in Winnipeg, something we gave a lot of thought to?

Government Orders

The point I raise is the general public's view of professional sports. He refers to the sports elite, the sports industry and the lack of attention to the development of amateur sport. When we lost our Winnipeg Jets hockey team in Winnipeg the public was so horrified at the prospect of losing the team that it agreed to take an equity position in the team and subsidize the losses of the team so it would stay in Winnipeg.

People were very emotional. We had a rally at the corner of Portage and Main with 10,000 people. Eight year old children brought their piggy banks and gave them to the owner Barry Shenkarow asking him to save the Jets and saying that they would do anything and pay anything.

The public picked up the losses. The first year was not bad, we lost \$2 million and we could kind of justify shelling out \$2 million from the public purse to keep the economy of the Winnipeg Jets in Winnipeg. The next year we lost \$14 million. That was getting a little stiff. The next year the Winnipeg Jets lost \$32 million. Here we were closing down inner city hockey rinks and wading pools for children to play and be active in because we could not afford them, yet we could afford to subsidize millionaire hockey players with the Winnipeg Jets.

Would the hon. member see the parallel that I am drawing here? There is too much attention toward the elite of sport and not enough attention toward the real issue of getting young people active and encouraging a new generation of kids into sports.

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague because he has hit on what I was trying to emphasize perhaps in my own feeble way. I am concerned because the bill has the two track approach. The sports side would be overwhelmed at the expense of the physical activity side.

There are a number of ways in which to respond to the member's point. One of them that comes to mind is the whole infrastructure program that occurred a few years ago. Some of that money in the province of Alberta went to the Calgary Saddledome and the Northlands Coliseum, or whatever business group it is named today.

That is not what Canadians in this Environics poll were talking about when they said to build more arenas. They want to build more arenas for kids to play hockey, not for the Jerome Iginlas and all the other superstar athletes.

That is the point my colleague is making, we need inner city activity. We need to get our kids involved in programs to get them away from the television set or other activities that are harmful to them and perhaps to other members of our society as well.

The member spoke of the specific incident of the Winnipeg Jets. A couple of years ago we went through the 24 hour flip-flop by the now Deputy Prime Minister about helping out professional sport teams with support payment subsidies. Canadians gave a very negative reaction to that. The quick reversal recognized the furor that it caused at the time.

Canadians are sending a clear message. I am glad the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport is here today and listening to this debate because it is important that we focus on the physical activity side so that it is not overwhelmed by the glamorous professional sport or the excellence of our top athletes.

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to reply to the hon. member's concern, that is precisely what the Canadian sports policy, endorsed by all 14 jurisdictions a week ago in Iqaluit, is calling for. It is that balance in the participation side.

However, it is a little concerning when we seem to want to put one against the other, participation and elite. They are very compatible. The more we encourage participation the more we would broaden the feeder systems up into the elites. The more our high performance athletes excel then the more we would have that inspiration to get people more active. I understand the member's concern, but it is one that has been fully addressed in the policy and in the legislation.

• (1655)

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. I hope that is the case. I take him at his word.

All I am trying to say is that it seems there will inevitably be more tugs and pressures toward putting resources to the high performance side. That is why I think the minister and the department need to keep their eye on the ball. However it is comforting to hear what the minister is saying. We will be watching with care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too appreciate the secretary of state's answer, all this while respecting jurisdictions. When one starts talking about health, it is an area of provincial jurisdiction, an area under Quebec's jurisdiction, one is talking about.

I believe that is what the secretary of state intends to do with regard to sport, to discuss and give the provinces, therefore Quebec, the necessary funding to promote physical activity. I believe that it is the intent of the bill. I hope that is what it is.

In another vein, my question would deal with the fact that I believe the bill to be a golden opportunity to enforce the Official Languages Act. I would like to know whether the member and his party would agree to include in the preamble and in specific parts of the act provisions to explicitly enforce the Official Languages Act.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. Yes, of course we think the Official Languages Act should be respected.

In the preamble to his intervention the hon. member talked about health as a totally provincial jurisdiction. That is not my interpretation of health care in Canada. It is a shared jurisdiction. It is clear from the British North America Act that there is a significant federal component to health care. The federal government has responsibility for maintaining the five principles of the Canada Health Act. The federal government needs to work with the provinces and territories in this area but it is not an either/or situation. It is the same in agriculture where there is joint jurisdiction.

Regarding the Official Languages Act, there is no question our party supports the hon. member's view.

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[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, Gasoline prices; the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Employment insurance; the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, Middle East.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of fitting circumstances in the House. Given that you are presiding over the debate I point out that you have long been an advocate of sports and an individual capable in his own right, as is the minister and the hon. member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton.

We in the House had the great honour today of being graced with the presence of Olympic and Paralympic athletes. I will not make parallels with the fitness levels of the minister or some hon. members of the House. I had the opportunity to serve with the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport on a committee that delved into some of the challenges facing amateur, and to some extent professional, athletes in Canada. I also served with him on the justice committee. I know this is an issue near and dear to his heart. I have also had the opportunity to play hockey against him and have the scars to prove it.

Bill C-54 has at its root the promotion of physical activity and the aspects of health that flow from a healthy and active lifestyle. That is what all hon. members and all Canadians should be focusing on. It is a positive piece of legislation in that regard.

There are more technical elements to the bill. It would replace the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act which was enacted in parliament in 1961, around the same time the Prime Minister and the Sea Kings arrived on the scene.

Bill C-54 would establish a sport dispute resolution centre in Canada. This is important in its own right. It would set up a body with the ability to intervene and act as an arbitrator to avoid protracted, drawn out legal disputes that interfere with and in some cases paralyze activities and organizations that promote sport activities. An independent organization with a mission to provide sport and sport communities with a national alternative dispute resolution would be a positive contribution. It is a positive part of the bill.

We can hearken back to the dark days of Canadian amateur sport where we saw doping in some Olympic events. With great sadness everyone can recall the Ben Johnson affair. Great pride in his accomplishment was dashed at the revelation that doping had entered into his sporting prowess. We can also recall the Dubin inquiry and the lessons learned from that exercise.

The backdrop to some of the accomplishments of sport could be enhanced and improved for future development by virtue of the legislation before us. One element that would come from the dispute resolution centre is accountability. The bill contains mechanisms to encourage reporting, help bring about public understanding and accountability, and enable the auditor general to keep track of funding as a reminder that necessary resources may not be

forthcoming. The infrastructure Bill C-54 would be put in place is a positive step forward.

As I said in my opening comments, the objective of Bill C-54 is to promote physical activity. A fundamental element of a healthy lifestyle and well-being is encouraging Canadians to become more engaged and participate. Canadians and many in the House will recall the analogies that used to be made between the average 60 year old Swede and the average 25 or 30 year old Canadian. The ParticipAction ads were meant to promote Canadians getting more involved in community activities. These did not necessarily include organized sport but simple activities such as walking, running, getting out and living a healthy lifestyle, and being more health conscious. They raised public consciousness of the ability of an active lifestyle to enhance quality of life be it through sport or other physical activity.

● (1700)

Bill C-54 is in the same vein. It would go in the same direction. It would encourage Canadians to improve their health by integrating physical activity into their lives each and every day. It would help reduce some of the barriers faced by Canadians that prevent them from pursuing an active lifestyle.

Increased participation in organized sport has as a corollary and added bonus the pursuit of excellence in sport and the early recognition for young people that there is a higher level to which they can aspire. As much as I agree with the commentary about the need to balance our support and resources for high end achievers, the Paralympians and Olympians we saw before us today are heroes to young people. They give them the inspiration to aspire to a greater level of accomplishment.

It is important that we support elite athletes, programs that recognize excellence, and new sports. It was interesting during the Olympics to see sports like snowboarding, skeleton and some of the new winter sports in which Canada could excel and lead the world. Women's participation has come of age in recent years in rugby, hockey and sports that for years were male dominated and associated with men's activities. We are seeing women participate at world class levels. Our women's hockey team is a shining example of that.

Sport activities at grade school, high school and post-secondary school levels are a source of pride particularly for rural communities in places like St. John's, Newfoundland, the maritimes and throughout the country. Quebec has been at the forefront. Its approach in many instances should be the model for the country, just as it has led the way in youth activities and the way it treats young people. The way Quebec interprets federal legislation such as the Young Offenders Act is very beneficial to the people of the province. We could learn a great deal from the way Quebec promotes young people and activities within its boundaries.

Government Orders

Bill C-54 would help build on some of the foundations that already exist in minor sports programs throughout the country. It would build on our capacity to promote and enhance sporting activity. Some of the agreements and arrangements in Bill C-54 would allow the minister, with the approval of the governor in council, to enter into agreements with provinces and territories to provide for payments or contributions in respect of the costs incurred by provinces when undertaking programs to encourage and promote physical activity and sport. With the approval of the governor in council provinces might enter into arrangements with the federal government or foreign states to promote and develop sport.

We are seeing opportunities for unique sporting activities to occur. For example, other countries could send athletes to Canada to participate in exchange programs. We are seeing unique activities in Iqaluit with the aboriginal games. I am encouraged to see the coverage. It allows Canadians to see the unique sporting events that are part of aboriginal culture in the north. That cultural link is a source of pride. It is important to communities. It is important in defining how young people and Canadians see themselves, their place in the world, and their place in the sporting venues and arenas of the world.

Bill C-54 would establish a not for profit corporation called the sport dispute resolution centre. The centre would aim at taking away some of the acrimony that naturally comes from a competitive environment and putting the focus back on the sport. This is a wonderful element of the bill. It would put the emphasis on the athletes and the activity and take away the pettiness and natural acrimony that sometimes results from a competitive environment.

● (1705)

The centre of course is not an agent of Her Majesty, the department, the corporation or the crown within that Financial Administration Act. It is there acting as an independent body. Presumably the appointment process will result in individuals having long connections, long associations and understandings of sports resolutions to act as referees, which again is something I know the Chair has a great deal of understanding about, even though at times referees are accused of turning a blind eye or not necessarily picking up on all of the activities, just as persons might accuse speakers of the House from time to time. It is good to see the Speaker wearing glasses.

The Progressive Conservative Party wholeheartedly supports physical participation. We support the spirit and intent of the bill. It encompasses the message of health and fitness and encourages Canadians of all ages to become more involved.

It was heartwarming to see the efforts made by the Minister of Health in recent months to promote the same idea shared by the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, that Canadians benefit intrinsically from being more active. Intrinsically, the health care system will have corollary benefits from a more healthy and active lifestyle promoted by Canadians.

In the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle, we must keep in mind that there are infrastructure requirements.

Turning to that subject matter for a moment, I want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the people in Sherbrooke, a small

community in my constituency, who, with the assistance of the Government of Canada and the NHL Players' Association which came forward with a significant contribution at a crucial time, built what they call the Sherbrooke recplex, a community rink that now has the ability to promote its minor hockey program and figure skating. The surrounding area is now able to access ice time and participate in a very real way in sporting activities and it has created a greater sense of community for this small village of Sherbrooke.

Similarly, we saw the opening of the Millennium Centre in Antigonish at St. Francis Xavier, a terrific state of the art complex that will help enhance that university's ability to recruit but, more important, to be competitive and to promote the same sort of ideals that we want to see encompassed in this type of legislation.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the upgrade at the New Glasgow Stadium and the hosting of the under 17 world hockey tournament that took place two years ago and some of the worldclass events that have been hosted in northern Nova Scotia, a region which I represent. It is a region, I hasten to add, that has produced some worldclass athletes: Colin White and Jon Sim were both winners of Stanley Cups in the past number of years; Joey MacDonald and Derrick Walser were both recently promoted to the NHL. They follow in the footsteps of Lowell MacDonald and Tiger Mackie and players who came up through the Pictou county and Antigonish—Guysborough county hockey leagues to go on to accomplish great things. That was just in one sport. Our region has produced a number of worldclass athletes who have competed around the world with great pride.

Certainly my region and my province share the hopes and aspirations of all Canadians in promoting this type of bill. It is a good news bill, a bill I know the minister takes great pride in and a bill that promotes some of those very core values that encourage family participation. One only has to go to the ball diamonds, the rinks and the basketball courts to see the number of families who promote and band together around activities that their children and sometimes their parents and grandparents are taking part in.

I know that the direction in which the legislation is headed is one that I think, on certainly a non-partisan level, members of the House of Commons can agree upon. It provides both immediate and long term health benefits. Physically active lifestyles do help combat childhood obesity, a condition that many studies have shown to be on the rise since the early 1980s.

● (1710)

Healthy lifestyles save Canadians massive amounts of dollars in the health care system. It goes without saying that we need to encourage children early on to develop habits of not only healthy activity but healthy diets, healthy lifestyles and a healthy mind set which are achieved through participation in sports.

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, as a parent I know you must recognize that there are many intrinsic values that serve young people throughout their entire lives when they participate in a sport: fair play, competition, the need for hard work, the need for team work, the need for working together and dealing with both wins and losses. All of these I find are very much a part of the entire sporting experience.

As one hockey dad described it to me, he said that it was sports or courts for a lot of young people. That is the choice that in many instances young people in both inner city and rural environments sometimes are faced with. Sports is an outlet that prevents them from going down a path of a life of crime, a life of drug or alcohol addiction. It is a benefit that has enormous consequences in terms of involvement at an early age and the enhancement of life skills, of the ability of young people to recognize the choices they make and the affiliations they make with others. Travel opportunities often exist for young people who make a commitment to a team or to an individual sport early in life.

The coaches, the trainers, the physiotherapists and those who work as a support system around sports will also be very pleased to see the direction in which the bill brings us. Motivated by the love of sport, as are many Canadians, there is an understanding now that by investing early on, be it in terms of the resources for infrastructure, for programming or for supporting existing sporting activities, there is an incredible exponential payoff later in life and in real dollar terms for the government.

I again congratulate the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport. By committing to this type of legislation and by committing to shaping and improving lives through participation in sports, the dividends from investing early will no doubt pay off and make Canada a better place. As we have seen today, this will provide us with a source of pride and a source of inspiration with programs that can produce worldclass athletes. They will perpetuate this feeling of accomplishment, this motivation for young people who see their heroes win those medals, hoist that cup and win that competition.

I am very pleased to speak in favour of the legislation on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. We look forward to seeing the legislation come to fruition. We look forward for the opportunity of participating in future debates on legislation that can truly be deemed as wonderful and productive legislation for Canada.

• (1715)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, on this historic day, a day on which we all enjoyed having the Olympians here with us in this very theatre, I look around and see many people who were heavily involved in sports in the past.

My colleague mentioned young people imitating their heroes and becoming great athletes. I know some who probably looked at their heroes who were referees and went the other way and became good hockey players, but we cannot blame them for that.

In the presence of the minister responsible for HRDC, I would like to ask my colleague a question. He talked about the need for facilities. In recent years there have been many cutbacks, especially at the provincial levels, and many of the smaller communities in rural Canada are finding it difficult to create and maintain facilities.

One of the agencies, which perhaps did not receive the credit it deserved in the past, is the Department of Human Resources Development Canada whose labour component has created many facilities throughout the country.

In light of the cutbacks in areas where capital has been provided in the past, does my colleague think the department should be encouraged to continue promoting and supporting sports and creating sports facilities throughout the country? We often criticize but we must also give credit where credit is due. Without the help of the minister's department many good, solid local facilities would not exist.

• (1720)

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with this positive announcement today and the bill, I would have to agree with my colleague. I know that the local HRDC office in the riding I represent in Nova Scotia has been very forthcoming in providing programs that allow members of the community to actively participate in the construction of ball diamonds.

I mentioned the recplex in Sherbrooke and other facilities wherein there is a twofold benefit. A job is provided. The individual has the opportunity to feel a sense of pride in the construction of a sporting facility and the facility itself is brought to fruition, is completed wherein it can serve the needs of that community. The person is also left with the sense of ownership having completed a very integral and important part of the community infrastructure.

Yes, I agree with him. I hope the HRDC department will take heed of its opportunity to work in synergy with sports and recreation and with the Department of Health and to continue to provide that type of infrastructure which has such huge benefits, particularly in rural Canada, as my colleague from St. John's has quite correctly pointed out.

We certainly do acknowledge and thank the minister of HRDC for her department's involvement in that positive effort.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am starting to wonder whether by any chance my colleague would not be tempted to cross the floor. It is rather surprising. In any case, if good things happen, so much the better.

I would like to ask the member a question very similar to the one I put earlier to the NDP member, that is would it not be appropriate, I would even say necessary, to state in the preamble to the bill as well as in specific provisions that the Official Languages Act must be protected and enforced.

I would like to hear from the PC member what he and his party think about this.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Yes, I believe it is necessary to include a very clear statement in the bill.

Government Orders

[English]

I think it is very important for the provinces to know where they stand vis-à-vis the federal government's intention. They need to know whether the government will contribute a certain level and whether they will have the liberty and initiative to control where these programs will go. They also need to know to what degree the federal government will follow that age old practice of attaching conditions upon the level of support and the resources that often follows.

As far as the member's comment about me going elsewhere, I can assure him that it is not likely to happen. However I do think that in this place there is a time for non-partisan debate and an acknowledgment when programs that are presented to us are done with the best interest of Canadians. We sometimes need to be a little more constructive in our criticism.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

● (1725)

[Translation]

PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests, be read a second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests. It is no secret that the population of Canada and Quebec is increasingly concerned by the overuse of pesticides. Through this bill, we will be bringing up to date the 1969 legislation, which is 33 years old.

During the last parliament, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, where I had the opportunity to participate for almost a year in hearings on this issue. We tabled a very substantive report, which made positive suggestions to the government asking it to take action on the issue.

After hearing very many witnesses, we came to the conclusion that the concern of Canadians and Quebecers was justified and that pesticides could pose a serious threat to human health and the environment.

I must say that Canada's policy on pesticides leaves a lot to be desired. As a matter of fact, regulations and the pesticides management system regulating the use of pesticides have remained unchanged for the last 30 years. Obviously, the government uses outdated scientific data to register this kind of product, which poses an extremely serious threat to society in general and especially for children, pregnant women, fetuses and seniors. During the hearings of the committee last year, Dr. Kelly Martin, of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment stated, and I quote:

I would say there's concern. There's limited evidence, and there's quite a lot of concern over that. It's not like leukemia and lymphoma, for which we have reasonably good evidence to act on. Breast cancer is the other big concern with pesticides.

Dr. Meryll Hammond, founder of Action Chelsea for the Respect of the Environment, also expressed her concerns to the committee, and I quote:

Many studies published in prestigious, peer-reviewed medical and epidemiological journals and reports point to strong associations between chemical pesticides and serious health consequences, including—and I'll just read this list briefly—endocrine disruption and fertility problems, birth defects, brain tumours and brain cancer: cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, childhood leukemia, cancer clusters in communities, gastric or stomach cancer, learning disabilities, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, canine malignant lymphoma, and various acute effects—

Children are vulnerable in part because they run a greater risk of exposure to pesticides due to the specific characteristics of their development and physiology. For example, they eat more food, drink more water and breathe more air per kilogram of body weight than adults and can thus absorb larger quantities of the pollutants present in the environment.

The main recommendation made by the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development was therefore for the government to review its pesticide management system and put the principle of safety foremost in its process of registering pesticide products.

From my examination of Bill C-53 I am pleased to note that Health Canada acknowledges that the primary objective of the bill in question is to protect Canadians, Canadian children in particular, and to ensure that there is an ample supply of healthy foods.

● (1730)

To that end, Bill C-53 includes provisions requiring the producers of pest control products to point out adverse effects on health, and older pest control products to be re-evaluated 15 years after registration, and giving the minister the power to withdraw them from the market if the information required is not provided. It also gives increased powers of inspection and provides for higher maximum fines. These can go as high as \$1 million for the most serious offences when pesticides are not marketed or used in accordance with the legislation.

As well, in many respects, the new process allows greater public participation through consultations held before major decisions are taken in respect of registration, special review or re-evaluation. Under the provisions of the new pest control products act, anyone will be able to make a request to the minister for a special review of the registration of a product.

Government Orders

Under the 2002 PCPA, anyone may file a notice of objection to an important registration decision. In addition, the review will be open to the public. The public will have numerous opportunities to participate and will have access to most of the information received by the review panel.

There will also be a public registry. This registry will include information on registrations, re-evaluations, and special reviews, including the PMRA's detailed evaluations of the risks and values of pesticides.

I would remind the House that when witnesses appeared before the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and we tabled the report, they complained vigorously about the PMRA and very serious problems within this government structure. I hope that, with this bill, the government will have listened and taken action to ensure a truly rapid response. When people put questions to PMRA representatives, they will receive a speedy response.

Information on tests will also be available. The public may inspect the results of scientific tests submitted to justify registration requests. If what the government does in practice is consistent with a desire to protect society, as set out in the bill, it will be possible to meet Health Canada's primary objective. Note that I said if.

However, allow me to express a reservation with regard to Bill C-53, which does not fully follow up on a recommendation made by the Standing Committee on Environment. The committee felt that, by 2006, there should be a re-evaluation of all pesticides registered before 1995. Unfortunately, the bill does not seem to have set a deadline with regard to the re-evaluation of old pesticides. Therefore, I hope the government will reverse its decision and will include into its legislation an amendment to that effect. What is the point of tightening up pesticides registration standards if products registered over the last 30 years are not re-evaluated? Their harmfulness will remain the same and children, pregnant women and seniors will not be better protected for all that.

In that regard, the organization called Campaign for Pesticide Reduction has shown a cautious optimism with regard to the health minister's Bill C-53. According to the organization, in order to be effective, the new legislation should allow for the withdrawal of the registration of pesticides recognized as being harmful to health.

I agree with that position. If the health minister really wants to protect health, she will have to bring forward in committee an amendment providing that as soon as a pest control product is recognized as harmful to health, it will be removed from the registry. This is critical.

• (1735)

In my opinion, there is another deficiency in the bill, that is the cosmetic use of pesticides. Allow me to quote from the environment committee report.

A number of witnesses informed the committee that they are opposed to pesticide use for esthetic purposes in urban areas. According to the Working Group on the Health Dangers of Urban Pesticide Use, Nature-Action Québec, Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides and the Campaign for Pesticide Reduction, pesticides are used principally for esthetic purposes in urban areas and this poses an unnecessary risk for those applying the products and the general public. It cannot be emphasized enough that children at all stages of growth are the primary victims of our overuse of chemicals. As many of the effects of exposure to pesticides are chronic, they may

well suffer the consequences of exposure all their lives and even pass this on to the next generation

The Committee firmly believes that a moratorium on pesticide use for esthetic purposes is necessary until science has proven that the pesticides involved do not constitute a health threat and some light has been shed on the consequences of their use in urban areas. Pesticide use should only be permitted in an emergency, such as a serious pest infestation which threatens the health of people and the environment.

This was one of the main recommendations of the committee at that time, which was unfortunately ignored by the government when it drafted Bill C-53. I cannot understand how it can be that the government could set aside such an essential recommendation. People must realize that the mania for a beautiful and totally dandelion-free lawn is not without danger. Young children are the ones most likely to play in the grass, in parks or other areas in their neighbourhood.

There are, however, too many carcinogenic pesticides which are harmful to their growth and may even cause leukemia. It is very urgent and very strongly advised that the government add one recommendation and add a clause to its bill, which would be along the lines of finally setting a deadline for stopping the use of pesticides on lawns.

If we really want to have as our sole objective the protection of the health of society in general, there must be some compromises and we will have to accept having a few yellow flowers in our lawns. What is worse: childhood cancer or a few dandelions? I think that the answer is self-evident.

Moreover, we have succeeded in developing alternatives to pesticides for our lawns. In this respect, it is important to mention organic farming, which seeks to promote and protect biodiversity, sustainable development and the environment. The fact is that traditional farming causes soil erosion and degradation. The benefits of organic farming are threefold.

First, not using pesticides and synthetic fertilizers eliminates the potential danger of damage to the environment. Second, the absence of synthetic fertilizers forces farmers to be concerned with soil conservation ethics, which means maintaining and recycling soil nutrients, thus reducing the risk of pollution around the farm. Third, in winter, soil recovery with forage crops, winter grains and cover crops is emphasized to improve soil condition and reduce the risk of erosion, degradation and compaction.

• (1740)

A number of cities in Canada and in Quebec have already begun using environmentally friendly means, similar to organic farming, to maintain their parks and lawns. According to Nature-Action Québec, it is possible to have a nice lawn without using chemicals. I do not intend to give a gardening and groundskeeping 101 course, but appendix 11.1 of the report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development includes some useful tips for achieving a good looking lawn without the use of pesticides.

Government Orders

These are practical yet very simple tips. Companion planting works wonders in gardens. Many insects are repelled by garlic, chive, mint, anise, coriander, geranium, nasturtium and many other plants. For example, putting such plants close to rosebushes will keep aphids away.

Natural substances may also be used to catch pests. A container full of a mixture of molasses, lemon juice and water will attract earwigs, and they will drown. Slugs react in a similar fashion to beer and honey. As for carpenter ants, they are attracted to and poisoned by a mixture of peanut butter and boric acid.

A number of natural infusions make excellent pesticides. Mixtures made of rhubarb, onion, garlic and soap, for instance. They can be sprayed on vegetables, put on the soil, applied to tree trunks or poured directly on plants.

There is no need to spread carcinogenic products over our lawns. Natural products work fine. The government could have prohibited the use of pesticides for aesthetic purposes, because there are natural and effective alternatives. Unfortunately, the bill seems to ignore the importance of research into and development of organic pesticides.

Nonetheless, Bill C-53 is a step in the right direction. It will allow for the review of legislation that is 30 years old and now outdated, given the evolution and progress of science. It will also establish the paramountcy of the principle of safety and general health protection. Yes, there are shortcomings, as I mentioned earlier in my speech. That being said, this bill will provide for greater transparency and increased public involvement. It provides for very severe fines for companies that try to give misleading information. We will now be able to progress, but we cannot stop at this.

This bill must become a catalyst to raise awareness among people that pesticides are toxic. These are products whose sole purpose is to kill. Apple producers make up to 16 applications of pesticides per year to prevent the apple scab, yet this fungus, when appearing in small amounts, only has a minor effect on the nutritional value of the fruit.

Sooner or later, we, as a society, have to make a choice: do we want to eat poisoned apples and have lawns that stink of chemicals, or live in a more healthy environment?

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Jonquière for the quality of her speech. She clearly shows that the Bloc Québécois is able to make analyses that are not partisan and that reflect reality. Without necessarily responding to all the needs, this bill is a positive step, and the Bloc recognizes it as such.

However, I would like to ask her whether it would not be desirable to propose an amendment to put forward incentives to foster organic agriculture.

In my riding, we have the Institut de technologie agricole, or ITA, of La Pocatière. Students and teachers there have developed expertise in organic agriculture and in the specific sector of horticulture. I think the government should have included in this bill the possibility of providing incentives to help develop this type of activities. In an environmental perspective, this would have been a very meaningful and important step forward.

I would like to ask my colleague if she intends to propose an amendment or to try pressing the government to correct its bill to ensure that, in five or ten years, people will realize that action was taken to get rid of rather artificial pesticides and replace them with organic processes and approaches that improve the quality of life in all our environments.

• (1745)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Mr. Speaker, when the environment committee tabled its report, we specified that the government should act on this.

The government will have to give grants to organic farming pilot projects. As my colleague said, now is the time to act. Five years from now, it will be too late. We have the bill; the process has been set in motion. The Bloc Québécois says "Yes, we have taken a step in the right direction". However, we should have a vision for the future.

In all areas having to do with pesticides and organic farming, all areas that will be of growing concern to future generations, a process must be set in motion now, through bills with teeth, to ensure they will have tools to move forward.

Someone will have to put forward an amendment, and I hope the government will be open-minded enough to consider that amendment.

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her answer. It is encouraging indeed. I hope the government heeds our suggestion and, ultimately, when the bill comes back to the House for further study, it will contain an amendment like the one that the Bloc Québécois would like to see included in the bill.

I will remind the House that the president of the Order of Agrologists of Quebec, Claire Bolduc, stated that the fact that this bill does not encroach on provincial jurisdictions was not really a problem in Quebec. We already have an act which, as she said, is not perfect, but it is among the toughest in that area.

Finally, do the bill before us and the amendments to be proposed shortly not represent a victory for those who want a healthier environment? Should we not ensure today that we have a bill for the future, a bill that will last five, ten, fifteen or twenty years because we really do need to clean up our act in this area? The fact that we support this bill shows that the environment is a great concern for both Quebecers and other Canadians.

Should we not call upon the people to take more responsibility in that regard and to approach their governments, at the municipal, provincial or federal level, and urge them to take action to constantly improve the quality of our living environment?

Government Orders

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Mr. Speaker, just like my colleague, this is what I hope for. We have a tool for the future. We all want to protect the environment.

The environment committee report is quite comprehensive; one can find everything in the document. I invite people to obtain a copy of the report—there are still copies in both French and English—in order to see the very serious work done by the committee. The witnesses who appeared before the committee said what the government should aim for. We heard from some fine witnesses people who made some very compelling suggestions.

The report sets out everything needed for the government to finally become a leader in the area of pesticides and organic farming and everything pertaining to our collective conscience. Every day, people are being challenged; now they will have some way of realizing that maybe tomorrow will be too late and that they should act right now.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Vancouver Island North.

It is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-53, a bill that deals with pesticides. There is a lot of information and some misinformation concerning pesticides and I think that above all else we must ensure that the precautionary principle is upheld. All of us here in the House want to ensure that public health and public safety are number one, but we want to make sure that whatever decisions we make on pesticides are based on scientific fact. Herein lies the difficulty: getting to the facts of the matter.

Pesticides are a double-edged sword. On the one hand they deal with removing pests, which is necessary for the production of the food products all of us eat, but on the other hand there can be side effects. I will use the example of DDT. We know that DDT has saved the lives of millions of people around the world by preventing malaria and other diseases. In fact it has saved a lot of crops. On the other hand, on our continent we have seen that DDT has had a disastrous effect upon raptors. We saw the decimation of the populations of bald eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons and many others when their eggs became too fragile for the little chicks to live. As a result, DDT was rightly banned in North America. We want to make sure in dealing with pesticides that science and public safety will be upheld.

I only have a few minutes so I will deal with an issue that is important in my heart and to many of my constituents and that is the safety of children. We know that all of us are living in a chemical soup. It is a soup made up of chemicals from pesticides and from agricultural products that are dumped into the water and get into our environment. Sadly, when we track this over the last 25 years we see a very disturbing trend. We see a massive increase in asthma and a massive increase in childhood tumours, from acute lymphocytic leukemia to tumours of the central nervous system and tumours of the bone and muscle. This is very disturbing because these tumours have been and are very rare, but the numbers are increasing quite dramatically.

If we look at different demographic patterns and different areas where these tumours and cancers are found, we see a trend that correlates in some cases to areas where people are exposed to a high level of pesticides. In my province of British Columbia in the Okanagan Valley, in areas around Prince George and indeed in my riding in Sooke, I see a very disturbing trend of an unbelievable increase in the amount of tumours that are relatively rare, but in profusion in these areas, and a parallel with the implementation and use of certain pesticides.

What we in our party are saying is let us make sure that pesticides are safe. We applaud the bill in the sense that it deals with issues such as children and issues such as using science, but we think it can go further. We think the government and the minister should be using scientific information not only from within Canada but from around the world. Why do we not hook up with other researchers around the world and use the best information, the best science, to apply to the work that we are doing here? Surely countries around the world, all of us, are in the same position. All of us want to ensure whether certain pesticides should or should not be used. We are asking the government to link up, to make official linkages with other researchers around the world to ensure that the best research information is used in the evaluation of pesticides.

Other things can be done. There are alternatives to pest control, such as using certain trees and shrubs, using certain lawn products that are not pesticides, digging weeds out by hand and keeping our lawns well watered and fertilized. We should remember that a healthy lawn is a healthy deterrent to weeds. We also can use different vegetable gardens. Indeed, if we plant alternative plants we can find a cross benefit in protecting gardens from certain pests. We also can use biodegradable products, cultivate our gardens and rotate our crops each year. These are alternatives to the very easy response, which is to simply spray our lawns with a pesticide.

• (1755)

What the government can do is work with the other two jurisdictions, the provinces and the municipalities, on a public education program to tell the public that there are other ways to protect our lawns, that there are alternatives to pesticides. Were we to do that, we would see a dramatic reduction in pesticide use among homeowners. Although homeowners represent only 15% of all pesticide users, why it is important is that it is homeowners who use pesticides inappropriately. That is the key. I would ask the Minister of the Environment to work with his counterparts across the country on a public information program that would dramatically reduce pesticide use by showing how to use pest control alternatives. We must remember that pesticides are only one of the choices we have in this whole area.

Government Orders

There are other things we need to do. We need to look at risk management, accountability and transparency. One of the things we have found that is problematic in the Pest Management Regulatory Agency is that there is not enough transparency, not enough accountability, in determining the evaluation process. In my riding and I am sure in many others, Canadians are concerned. They do not have the information. They are concerned when people get sick after being exposed to pesticides. They do not have answers, but they want and indeed deserve answers from the government. Why does the minister not stand up with his counterparts and answer the questions the public has?

As an example, we can look at the gypsy moth eradication program that took place on Vancouver Island. Low flying planes sprayed pesticides all over Victoria. The question is, was it useful? Another question is, was it necessary? I think the answer to both is no. No, it was not useful. No, it is not necessary. Clearly we cannot have these knee-jerk responses to dealing with problems as opposed to having well thought out, reasoned ideas and solutions to deal with the management of pests that exist among us.

Another problem we have in British Columbia is the issue of the northern pine beetle. The northern pine beetle is having devastating effects on the forest industry in my province. People who fly over northern British Columbia see a swath of forest that has been destroyed by the northern pine beetle. It is staggering. The economic effect has been devastating. That, combined with the punitive American softwood lumber tariffs that have been imposed on our country, has been devastating for our lumber industry. My colleagues in our party have asked the minister across the way to please intervene with the forest industry and stakeholders and deal with this problem. If it is not dealt with, this summer will be a very bleak one indeed for the forestry industry as the northern pine beetle continues its devastating ways, destroying larger and larger swaths of the Canadian northern forest industry.

There is a huge movement in the country to deal with the abolition of genetically modified organisms. A lot of emotion surrounds the issue. The fact is that if we did not have GMOs large numbers of crops we normally have would be destroyed. We cannot forget that GMOs provide our burgeoning population with food. Who are we, who can afford products that are not modified in any way, to tell developing countries that they cannot have genetically modified foods?

GMO foods are saving millions of lives across the world. We cannot deny those food products and seeds to countries that are on the brink of starvation. If they did not have them, crops would be destroyed by normal pests that eradicate foods in those developing countries. We need to stand up and say that genetically modified organisms must be allowed if they are safe and we must do the research to ensure that they are safe. On the other hand, we cannot have a knee-jerk response and deny the developing world genetically modified foodstuffs that will save people's lives.

It is a balancing act. We support a balancing act that of course favours public safety, but again, let us respond to these challenges based on fact and science and not based on emotion.

● (1800)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to Bill C-53, which is about regulating pesticides. I am pleased to do so because prior to joining this place I held a pesticide applicator's licence for about 20 years and used pesticides in a very broad landscape, that being the forests on the coast of British Columbia. Of course that at times could be a controversial thing to do, but I think I did it very responsibly. I feel that as a consequence of that background I can bring a perspective to this issue that is different from many in the House

The average person has to think for a minute about what we mean when we say pesticide, because it can mean anything from the little spray thing used on insects to something spread by an airplane in Vietnam to knock out forest canopy. There are a lot of visual images. Pesticides is the umbrella term for herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. When we talk about using a pesticide, then, we have to define what the pest is, and the pest is in the eye of the beholder. What is a pest today might not be a pest tomorrow.

We are all sophisticated enough to recognize that when it comes to a management regime, it is important to define what we are trying to do and to target whatever we are trying to do as closely as possible. That is something I took pride in doing, because for the most part the kinds of applications I was involved with were done by hand and done, in my case, on an individual tree basis.

This did give me a certain perspective relating to how the pesticide management review agency should operate. At that time, if a product had an agricultural label, even though that might be a perfect formulation for use in the forest, one might be pre-empted from using it. Because the agricultural market then was a lot larger than the forest management market, many companies refused to pay the serious upfront expenditures required in order to get that kind of labelling because it was simply not worth it.

We oftentimes felt we were using chemicals that we would have preferred not to, but we were using them because they were the only ones authorized under the federal permitting process. I have not kept up with all of the detail behind this, but in all likelihood that probably is still occurring. I see that the legislation still includes as a part of the process that the effectiveness of the chemical be listed and I think this is counterproductive. This is one part of the bill that I definitely would like to see changed. Let the customer, the industry, whatever sector is using that formulation, determine whether or not the chemical is effective.

● (1805)

I can give a somewhat humorous example. When maple trees are cut down they coppice, they tend to grow up from the stump. There is a lot of energy in the roots and they have this multiple stem coppice that comes up. We found this most disconcerting in some areas that had a lot of maple. We wanted to establish a new crop, but that is not what we wanted so we tried different chemicals and chemical formulations and nothing worked. Then we had a crew go through a hillside and inject the individual stems. We found that it worked sometimes and not other times.

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Through trial and error and scientific analysis we checked to see why it would work here and not work there. We found it was working where we had a somewhat lazy operator, a lazy worker who did not treat every stem or every coppice. We figured the biology is that by keeping a few alive, the material recycled enough times that it got everywhere and then eventually killed the entire coppice network.

We learned a huge lesson by accident from a worker who was not following instructions. The very way we have had some of our best scientific discoveries has been through laboratory accidents or observations where things have happened overnight in a Petri dish or in some other experiment.

The government should try to stay away from regulating all of the uses or potential uses and let industry and the user make that decision. Of course, safety has to be the first and foremost concern.

Those are some of my key observations. I am a great believer that target treatment is important. Operational and other research and development should be encouraged. The way to encourage that is to have not too much specified detail on how people utilize the material.

Other than that, the bill is going in the right direction. I am encouraged that we have let local usage be determined at the local level. That is very important.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-53, the pest control products act.

The bill is very important not only for the reasons the minister has put forward but also for many other reasons. This is far-reaching legislation. For the first time we have seen something which in a sense will have a direct impact on our community. Municipal politicians in the city of Ottawa are speaking in support of the bill, which is something we do not often see.

The bill will help ensure that our children get special protection from health risks posed by pesticides. To do so the government is enshrining in legislation the requirement to incorporate a modern risk assessment concept including additional safety factors to protect our children.

From a health and environmental aspect the bill requires that any aggregate exposure to pesticides from food, water, residential use and the cumulative effects of pesticides that act in the same way be assessed from here on in.

Another extremely important component about the bill is that the government is continuing to make strides to increase the protection of the health of Canadians. The newly introduced pest control products act will provide special protection for children and pregnant women, will facilitate sharing test data with other regulators and health professionals and will require older pesticides to be periodically re-evaluated.

It is exceptionally important for parliament to pass the bill as quickly as possible so it can be implemented.

I congratulate the minister on this initiative. As well, I congratulate all of the community interest groups who have written to the government and to our offices asking for the speedy passage of

the legislation. I do not want to take up any more time except to say that I hope it passes quickly.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Mr. Joe Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you seek it you will find consent to see the clock as 6.30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the proposal made by the parliamentary secretary. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 22, I asked a question in the House on gas prices. We all remember what happened last year. Last year, oil companies and gas stations decided to cool it. We did not see gas prices climb up overnight as dramatically as we have seen in recent weeks.

For example, before March 22, the price of gas at the pumps on Prince Edward Island was 64 ¢ a litre, whereas in New Brunswick, it was 74 ¢ on the same day. Across Canada, even here in Ottawa, the price of gas went up.

My question was as follows: Why does the federal government not establish a price review commission, as has done Prince Edward Island?

The price of gasoline per barrel was approximately \$25. It had not increased. It was as though Shell, Esso and Petro-Canada had gotten together and decided amongst themselves that, at 3 p.m., they would all climb up the ladder and raise their prices at the same time.

There was a time when the companies were less competitive. If one gasoline company dropped its price, or raised it, the other followed suit. Now they all act at the same time. Today being so much an age of computers, perhaps they just send each other e-mails. I have no idea how they do it.

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I do, however, find it unacceptable for the oil companies to be able to raise gas prices the way they do. I am certain that all Canadians everywhere in the country are displeased about this. I am certain that I am speaking at this time for anyone in any political party. The people of Canada are fed up with the way the oil companies of Canada are behaving.

My question is for the minister responsible. Would he be able to get the parties or the provinces to reach consensus? I know that the government representative, that is the parliamentary secretary, is going to reply "Not our responsibility; it is a provincial responsibility".

I am certain, however, that if it wanted to, the federal government could co-ordinate a meeting of the stakeholders in each of Canada's provinces and territories, in order to reach an agreement that would settle the gas problem. Even if the barrel head price does not go up, the price at the pump jumps by 10 ¢ at a time, for instance from 64 ¢ to 74 ¢ a litre. This is picking the pockets of the consumer and is unacceptable.

If the government wants to get serious, I think the response this evening has to be something other than "It's not our responsibility". As the government of this country, it has a national responsibility. It is up to the government to bring together all the players so that a gas price review board can be struck, such as they have in P.E.I. Even Newfoundland is currently looking at that possibility. The federal government should then be able to act proactively and to bring people together so as to advance their cause and stop them from being ripped off by the oil companies.

● (1815)

[English]

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not intend simply to say this is a provincial matter, but to share a little with the members on what is being done at the federal level.

One thing that is a hallmark of federal legislation in dealing with issues within the gasoline industry is the Competition Bureau. It is responsible to ensure that prices are determined by market forces. A fair, efficient and competitive marketplace provides Canadian consumers with the best prices and encourages companies to innovate and offer new product choices.

More specifically, the role of the Competition Bureau is to administer the Competition Act. The act contains criminal provisions that prohibit price fixing and price maintenance as well as civil provisions that deal with mergers and abusive behaviour by those in a dominant position among others.

All these provisions already apply to gasoline and other petroleum products. The purpose of the Competition Act is to maintain and encourage competition in Canada, and I remind members that this is different from protecting individual competitors or types of competitors.

Within the world of the Competition Act and what it attempts to do in preventing the abuse that the hon. member has mentioned, there are other things such as OPEC production cuts, political tension right now in the Middle East, which is a huge factor, and the recovery of the North American economy, which is now very much

in an upswing. These are factors that put pressure on crude oil prices which in turn impact gasoline prices. No matter which level of government we look to, we have to contend and accept that there are many factors that are beyond the realm of either the provincial or federal governments.

The Competition Bureau has been active in examining the markets in the domestic petroleum product industry. I can assure the hon. member that where the Competition Bureau finds that companies or individuals have engaged in anti-competitive conduct, it has no hesitancy whatsoever to move quickly with appropriate action. In fact, there have been convictions in eight out of the 12 cases which were taken to litigation and there is currently another case before the courts.

It is important to note that in the majority of the examinations of the retail gas sector in Canada, the bureau has generally found that prices have been established or set by market forces. Anyone who has evidence to the contrary has the onus to bring it forward to the Competition Bureau.

Although there is much more I would like to share with the House, I sense that I have come to the end of my time. I certainly look forward to responding after I hear the comments of the hon. member.

● (1820)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the Competition Bureau. Look at what has been happening. I do not know how we can pay a certain price for fuel in the middle of the week but when the weekend comes the prices go up. Then on the Monday they go back down. I do not see how that is competitive.

I said that the companies get together because their prices change at the same time. There is no competition between those companies. On Monday at three o'clock in the afternoon they all climb up their ladders at the same time and change the prices on their big signs. There is no competition in that. The only competition is to make big bucks on the backs of Canadians, and that is not acceptable.

I am saying to the more than 300 MPs in the House of Commons, who I am sure buy gas and have the interests of the people in their ridings at heart, that they should do their jobs and put a stop to the hiking of gasoline prices. My point is people do not like this.

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst who thinks that we cannot have the impact of market forces in the space of a weekend, let me point out that in the space of just two days last week we saw the head of the government in Venezuela, a key player within OPEC and within the price impact that that organization plays, lose his office on Friday and be back in office on Monday.

I would suggest that certain things do happen on the weekend which impact on these prices and which are outside of the control of government.

Adjournment Debate

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this session of parliament, I rose to ask the government, particularly the Department of Human Resources Development, to allocate additional resources for the processing of employment insurance claims. In the softwood lumber industry, particularly because of the crisis with the United States and also because of other market conditions, employment insurance claims have suddenly increased by 15%.

At that time, the minister told me that resources were being added and claims were processed more quickly. I think this is an interesting example of what should be done in the next 18 to 24 months. We know that a 29% tariff is now being imposed by the Americans and we have to act quickly. During this 18 to 24 month period, the government will have to provide enough support to workers and businesses until the WTO decision, which, I believe, will allow Quebec and Canada to win their case and return to free trade on softwood lumber.

Until then, would it be possible for the government to maintain the current moratorium on the number of weeks of benefits to be covered in the future, particularly in regions such as mine, where there are many lumber workers? There is an aberration: when the economy improves, resulting in lower unemployment rates, the number of weeks required to qualify for benefits is higher. This would be understandable in a region where the economy does not rely on seasonal activity, but in a region where the economy does rely on seasonal activity, each time the unemployment rate decreases, this has a negative impact on seasonal workers.

For the next weeks, the next months or the next two years, the government should take a preventive or proactive approach, which we did not see at the beginning of this session. We had to prompt the federal government to make adjustments and to take appropriate measures to help communities, businesses and workers remain supportive of the government's position so we can win our case.

Would it not be possible for the government to take a preventive approach, and bring forth proposals that will guarantee workers a sufficient number of weeks of benefits so as to not have to go through the spring gap again?

[English]

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know EI claimants need to make ends meet. It is a situation with which we have huge empathy. We are very concerned when EI payments are delayed.

The majority of HRCCs in Quebec have minimal backlog volumes despite increased claims intake. There has been an increase of up to 8.7% in 2001-02. However since the end of 2001, the total outstanding claims in the region have dropped from 54,000 to 21,000.

There are individual areas within the city of Montreal that have outstanding claims in excess of our guidelines. These have indeed caused some delays. The employees of HRDC are working hard to resolve these situations. Again, I reiterate these are isolated situations.

The goal of the department is to maintain service levels at 28 days for new claims and to keep backlogs to a minimum. We are doing everything we can to meet the needs of claimants in the face of significantly more EI claims than were expected.

To maintain the best possible service levels, the department is following standard high volume season practices. All available employees are assigned to claims processing so there has been a shift to meet that demand. The claimants who have been waiting the longest are processed first, as it should be. I can assure the hon. member that staff training and implementation of new systems and procedures are done on a priority basis.

We are also responding directly to the situation of workers laid off in the softwood lumber industry. The EI program is there right now to help those workers. We have a process for dealing with mass layoffs and this of course is an example of that. Employers are able to send us the information required electronically now. Automatically printed applications are sent to employers who give them to their affected employees.

● (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the parliamentary secretary that public servants are not to be blamed for the situation. They work really hard.

I would remind my colleague that, a few years ago, before cuts were made, there was an employment centre in La Pocatière with the highest efficiency level in Quebec and maybe all of Canada. That employment centre has now been closed and everything has been centralized in Rimouski. Public servants are very good at what they do, but there is a shortage of them, which means that if there is a sudden increase in EI claims, as was the case in Lac-Saint-Jean, we might be in need of additional resources and more flexibility.

To conclude, let me put this question to the parliamentary secretary. How would members of parliament and ministers react if, all of a sudden, instead of getting their regular monthly pay cheque, it was delayed for two or three weeks? Would there not be a general outcry to have the problem fixed?

When someone loses his or her job, there is a qualifying period, a two week additional delay. Out of respect for these workers and the well-being of their families, would it not be appropriate for the government to ensure that it can deliver on time?

[English]

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I do empathize because the client did not get a cheque every month but instead it was a number of weeks later. That would put hardship on my family and all the families to which the hon. member makes reference.

Adjournment Debate

However I spent most of the allotted time explaining that we were trying to respond rapidly to the problem. We are giving priority to those who wait the longest. We have brought in new systems. We are dealing with people by phone in a way we did not do in the past. All this is in recognition of exactly what the hon. member has described. We on the government side are doing our utmost to keep people from waiting any longer than necessary.

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 18 I asked the Prime Minister a question concerning the growing violence in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied territories. I pointed out that many Canadians were appalled at the brutal violence of Israeli forces in the occupied territories, the destruction of homes and clinics, the degrading mass detentions and the killings. At the same time I strongly condemned the attacks on innocent Israeli civilians.

I urged the Prime Minister to assure the House and all Canadians that Canada would support resolutions at the then upcoming session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights that called for full respect for international law and an end to the illegal occupation of all territories seized by Israel in 1967. That was on March 18.

At the end of March along with a number of colleagues from the House and Senate I participated in a parliamentary delegation at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The delegation included Liberal members. It included the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, Liberal Senator Mobina Jaffer from British Columbia, Conservative Senator Raynell Andreychuk, the hon. Bloc Québécois member from Châteauguay, and myself. Every member of the delegation without exception was absolutely appalled at the position the Canadian government took at the commission with respect to the issue of human rights.

A resolution was put forward at the human rights commission in Geneva based on the powerful and eloquent plea of Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms. Robinson had pleaded with the commission to recognize that a human rights and humanitarian tragedy was unfolding before our eyes in Israel and the occupied territories. She urged the commission to send a human rights delegation of respected leaders including herself to see firsthand the human rights situation.

What was Canada's position? Shamefully, Canada voted against sending a delegation to Israel and the occupied territories to look at the human rights situation. Only two of the 53 countries voted against sending a delegation. Guatemala was the other. Many Canadians were shocked, troubled and saddened the Liberal government was not prepared to support a delegation. Many delegates from other countries asked me the same question.

My question is for the government, through the parliamentary secretary. Will Canada finally show leadership and speak out strongly for an end to the illegal occupation? Will we call for a strong international protection force in the occupied territories to protect the Palestinian people from the ongoing brutality and violence of the Israeli defence forces? My colleagues and I in the New Democratic Party also condemn in the strongest possible terms the suicide bombings and attacks on innocent Israeli civilians as recently as this past weekend in the market in Jerusalem.

The violence must end. Canada must call for an international protection force and an end to the occupation.

• (1830)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby—Douglas for his question. It is difficult in four minutes to address all of his concerns. He has had more experience than I in doing so.

We strongly support the initiative right now of President Bush and the discussions which Secretary of State Colin Powell has had with Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat. These meetings have not resulted in an agreement but they are a welcome sign that both sides may be looking for a way out of this deadly confrontation in which Israelis and Palestinians are trapped. I urge them to do so.

Our ambassador to the UN, Paul Heinbecker, stated when he spoke to the UN Security Council on April 8:

That spiral of violence is threatening peace and stability well beyond the confines of the current fighting. Peace in the Middle East is everyone's business.

I turn to the UN Commission on Human Rights which at present is sitting in Geneva seized with a number of draft resolutions concerning the conflict in the Middle East, in particular, their consequences on human rights. Some of these drafts contain language which is extreme and one sided. It often asks the commission to do tasks which are not in its mandate and which it is ill-equipped to perform.

I should like to address certain misunderstandings which appear to prevail with respect to some of the criticisms of Canada's action at the human rights commission. Our voting is guided by the fundamental principles of our Middle East policy. I remind the House that these principles have been endorsed by successive governments and have served Canada well.

To have our support the resolutions should reflect fundamental principles of human rights law. They must be consistent with the treaties, agreements and UN jurisprudence which Canada supports and which underlie the negotiations between the parties to the conflict. They should not undermine the peace process or single out one party unfairly or indulge in inflammatory rhetoric. We take account of the voting intentions of like-minded member states although our decision is always our own.

The upheaval and bitterness provoked by the ever more violent confrontation in the region has created a more than usual emotional climate in the commission's deliberations this year. We are examining all resolutions closely. The Canadian delegation to the commission is working with vigilance to modify or oppose unhelpful resolutions. Our aim at the commission is consistent with our policy for the region, which is an end to violence and a return to dialogue and negotiations.

Adjournment Debate

•(1835)

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary to clarify our position with respect to the important resolution calling on Mary Robinson, as the United Nations commissioner on human rights, to lead a delegation to examine first-hand the human rights situation in the occupied territories in Israel.

She says that we examine resolutions with care and we look at the position of like-minded states. France, Germany, Spain and Sweden all supported that resolution. There was only one member out of 53, and that was Guatemala, that opposed it. What is clear to many Canadians is that while the United States may have been kicked off the human rights commission it now has a clear mouthpiece at the commission. Canada has in fact taken on the role of speaking on behalf of the United States. It is a pretty sad day for Canadian diplomacy at the human rights commission in Geneva. Why was Canada alone with Guatemala, out of 53 countries, in opposing Mary Robinson?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, our decision to vote against a resolution to send an observer mission to the region has indeed

attracted particular attention. I can assure the House that the decision was not taken lightly given Canada's traditional support for the commission on human rights, the respect we have for the high commissioner, and the gravity of the situation in the region.

Our decision reflected the serious concerns we had concerning the nature of that resolution and the likely impact that such an observer mission and this resolution would have on the search for peace in the region. Like others, including the U.K., Germany and Russia, which abstained, we believed that the scope and mandate of the mission were not properly defined. Our position reflected our considered assessment of the prospects of success. We believe, in the current political context, the UN Security Council is the most appropriate body to deal with those issues related to the maintenance of peace and security.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6.38 p.m.)

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